MIR QASIM

Nawab of Bengal, 1760-1763

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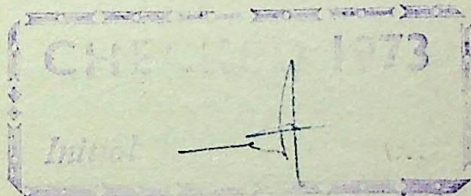
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PREFACE

Mir Qasim's administration is of the utmost interest in the history of the growth of the British power in Bengal, but it has not been adequately investigated so far. Forming as it does the prelude to the virtual termination of Muslim rule in that province, it surely deserves far greater attention than it has hitherto received. This is the only justification for the present work on the history of Mir Qasim's rule in Bengal.

In preparing the monograph I have spared no pains to make a detailed study of the available original sources, Persian as well as English. The manuscript documents preserved in the Imperial Record Office at Calcutta, which constitute the most important source of information relating to this period have been critically utilised in this work. Besides the English documents of the period, I have used all the relevant information from the Persian chronicles as well. The contemporary tracts and the Parliamentary reports, without which our knowledge of the period would have been necessarily limited, have also been judicially used along with the other sources. I should be ungrateful, if I did not acknowledge here my special obligation to the University of Allahabad for all the facilities and help I received when I was Research scholar in the History Department of that University in collecting the major part of the material on which the present work is based.

It may be pointed out in this connexion that an attempt has been made by some modern Indian writers with a patriotic bias to paint Mir Qasim as a heroic administrator and statesman, so solicitous of the interests of his subjects as to have nobly sacrificed his 'masnad' in their defence. In the present monograph, however, it has been demonstrated in course of a dispassionate survey of the contemporary evidence that the popular notions with respect to the Nawab and his government are mostly unwarranted, and need a revision.

I am deeply indebted to my former tutor, Sir Shafaat Ahmad Khan, M.A., Litt. D., etc., of the University of Allahabad, under whose guidance the present work was originally commenced, to my revered colleague, Professor Radha Kumud Mookerji, M.A., P.R.S., Ph.D., etc., of the University of Lucknow, but for whose sympathetic interest this work could not have been easily completed or published, and to the Editorial Boards of the various Historical Journals, such as Bengal: Past and Present, Journal of Indian History, Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Indian Historical Quarterly, Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society, Calcutta Review, and Journal of the U. P. Historical Society for having published a few papers contributed by me on the basis of my researches on Mir Qasim. My gratitude is due above all to Sir Jadunath Sarkar, C.I.E., M.R.A.S. (Hony.), for certain valuable suggestions.

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The University of Lucknow,
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CHAPTER I

THE EARLY PHASE OF MIR QASIM'S CAREER

The early life of Mir Qasim is obscure like that of many other characters of Indian History. No chronicler thought it necessary to enquire into the details of his younger days, and he had no court historian of his own, who could have left a detailed account of his life and activities. The date and the place of his birth are unknown, and cannot be ascertained. All that can be said is that he came of an ancient and noble family of Persian extraction. His father, nominally an Imperial mansabdar, was one of the numerous jagirdars in Bengal.[1] His name was very probably Razi Khan.[2] Mir Qasim's grandfather was Imtiaz Khan, a distinguished poet, surnamed Khalis,

[1] Khulasat-ut Tawarikh (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 344).

[2] *Ibid.* There is a diversity of opinion in regard to this point. In the Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 691), it is mentioned that Mir Qasim was a son of Sayyid Murtaza, although in Raymond's Translation of the Siyar (Calcutta Reprint, II, p. 374) the name given is "Seyd-Arizy-qhan." According to the Riyazu-s-Salatin (A.S.B. Text, p. 379), Mir Qasim's father was Nawab Imtiaz Khan, but this is a mistake, as the latter is stated to have been Mir Qasim's grandfather by all other chroniclers including Kalyan Singh, and Ghulam Husain. Kalyan Singh, however, may be relied upon, as he expressly mentions, "the author has heard from trustworthy persons that he was a son of Mir Razi Khan . . . . ."

who had once held the responsible office of the Diwan of Patna.[3]

Razi Khan appears to have been a rich man, but he did not take any active part in the politics of his time.[4] He led a retired life in his own jagir, the exact locality of which again is unknown.[5] It may possibly have been somewhere near Patna,[6] for according to Ghulam Husain, Mir Qasim's father was buried in a village called 'Lohanipur' not far from the latter city. Lohanipur was probably the principal village of his father, and it may be that he had been born and brought up here.

Mir Qasim surely received the best education of his age, as he grew up into a man of scholarly tastes. His contemporaries have borne testimony to his scholastic attainments. He was a keen student[7] of Mathematics and Astrology. His proficiency in Mathematics enabled him subsequently to be an efficient financial administrator. He did not, however, seem to have received any military training, and this remained his principal shortcoming.

When Mir Qasim attained his youth, he was married to Fatima Begam, daughter of Mir Jafar. It was surely

[3] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 691). Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 344). Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. University MS., p. 732).

[4] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 344).

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 749). There are still three villages with a somewhat similar name near Patna, but there is none called "Lohanipur." (For this information, the writer is indebted to Mr. G. E. Owen, I.C.S., sometime District Magistrate of Patna, who very kindly offered to make a local enquiry.)

[7] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 344).

his aristocratic lineage that made him eligible for the hand of Alivardi Khan's niece. It is stated by Kalyan Singh that Mir Jafar married his daughter to Mir Qasim at the instance of his brother-in-law Nawab Alivardi Khan himself.[8] The latter gave the young bride a handsome dowry, consisting of cash and jewels, besides a monthly allowance of Rs. 200 to Mir Qasim from the state treasury[9]. This allowance meant that he was henceforth to be one of the honoured courtiers of the Nawab. This marriage evidently marked an epoch in the early career of Mir Qasim. He was no longer to remain one of the obscure landholders of the country. He had now acquired a definite status which exalted his position considerably. Furthermore, he had gained an entrance into the arena of court politics, and it was now for him to distinguish himself as best as he could. But for this happy marriage, Mir Qasim would have ended his days like any other petty jagirdar. It would not be any exaggeration to state that his subsequent rise was absolutely due to his marriage with Mir Jafar's daughter. It must be understood, however, that he did not immediately obtain any important post. As a matter of fact, during the régimes of Alivardi Khan, and Sirajuddaulah, he remained in obscurity.

It was only when his father-in-law became the Nawab of Bengal that Mir Qasim began to take a prominent part in the administrative affairs. The accession of Mir Jafar to the masnad of Murshidabad was the next important epoch that changed the course of his son-in-law's career. An

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Ibid.* (Kalyan Singh alone has given such interesting details.)

unknown courtier now suddenly came into prominence by virtue of his close relationship with the reigning Nawab. By this time his abilities and experience had naturally ripened on account of his touch with the kaleidoscopic politics of the "Subah"; and the recent events must obviously have roused his dormant ambition. It is significant that Mir Jafar himself had not shown any marked favour or consideration to his son-in-law, and had done nothing to improve his status. In fact it appears that he positively disliked Mir Qasim.[10] It is difficult to account for this strange lack of cordiality between the two, but it may be suggested that Mir Jafar's prejudice against Mir Qasim arose out of his suspicion of the latter's ambitious intentions. Miran had also aggravated[11] his father's prejudice, as he looked upon his brother-in-law as a possible rival. In fact, Mir Qasim's future did not seem to be very promising. He had reckoned upon the support of Alivardi Khan alone, but after the latter's death, he was left without any well-wisher.

Mir Qasim had been an interested spectator of the revolution of 1757, that brought about the sudden elevation of his father-in-law to the masnad of Bengal. His opportunity now came. He was commissioned[12] by Mir Jafar to pursue the fugitive Nawab Sirajuddaulah who had fled for his life after the momentous rout at Plassey. Mir Qasim marched at the head of a small force to join Mir

[10] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 691).

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 640); Riyazu-s-Salatin (A.S.B. Text, p. 373).

Daud Ali Khan, Faujdar of Rajmahal.[13] Before his arrival at Rajmahal, however, the latter had been informed by a 'Faqir' who lived in the neighbourhood that Sirajuddaulah was at his place. The late Nawab had once maltreated this mendicant,[14] and the latter now wreaked his vengeance on him by betraying him to his pursuers. Both Mir Daud and Mir Qasim hurried to the residence of the 'Faqir,'[15] and surrounded Sirajuddaulah and his party. The unfortunate fugitives were subjected to a cruel treatment by the captors. Not even the ladies were spared. Mir Qasim's conduct in this unpleasant affair was extremely harsh and unchivalrous. He not only insulted and abused the late Nawab, but cruelly treated the latter's faithful concubine, Lutf-un-Nissa. He coerced her by threats into surrendering to him all her valuable jewels.[16] This example was promptly imitated by others who laid their hands upon the rest of the women. Mir Qasim thus easily came into possession of a valuable treasure that stood him in good stead later on. Ill-gotten though it was, it enabled him to recruit a small force of his own.[17] It is needless to add that Sirajuddaulah was escorted

[13] Siyar (Lucknow Text, pp. 640-41). Mir Qasim was not the Governor of Rajmahal, as has been stated by writers like Thornton (History of the British Empire in India, p. 55), or Beveridge (Comprehensive History of India, I, p. 487). Forrest (Life of Lord Clive, II, p. 12) has taken Mir Qasim for Mir Jafar's brother-in-law who too bore the same name.

[14] Siyar (Lucknow Text), pp. 640-41; Riyaz, p. 373.

[15] Chahar Gulzar Shujai (Elliot, VIII, p. 212). 'Dan Shah Pirzadah' according to Riyaz, 'Dana Shah' in the Siyar.

[16] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 641). Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 345).

[17] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 345). Chahar Gulzar Shujai (Elliot, VIII, p. 214).

by Mir Qasim's agents to Murshidabad where he was put to death.[18] The successful capture of the ex-Nawab and the spoliation of the latter's women marked the commencement of Mir Qasim's unscrupulous activities.

After his accession, Mir Jafar was kind enough to bestow on his son-in-law the governorship of Rangpur.[19] The position was certainly an arduous one; and as Faujdar of this district, he at once became one of the principal officers of the Government. It is a pity that we know very little about his short administration of Rangpur, but it may be presumed that he must have gained here a considerable experience of the administrative problems, which was serviceable to him after his elevation to the masnad of Murshidabad. It was at Rangpur that he could acquire a first-hand knowledge of the country's administration, and so his brief apprenticeship there was of great importance to him. Being in charge of a big frontier district, and of the troops stationed therein, Mir Qasim was soon able to aspire after greater honours, but the jealousy of Miran was a serious obstacle in his way.

Nothing of interest occurred in Rangpur during Mir Qasim's governorship except the appearance of Mons. Courtin and his party who had escaped from Dacca to Rangpur after the fall of Sirajuddaulah.[20] The French party held out on the banks of the river Tista, having erected a strong mud fort. Mir Qasim received orders

[18] For details, *vide* Siyar, Riyaz, Ibrat-i-Arbab-i-Basr, Tarikh-i-Mansuri, etc.

[19] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 691). Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 344).

[20] Orme's History of the Military Transactions, Vol. II, p. 285.

from the Nawab to attack them. He therefore marched against them early in 1758, and surrounded them from all sides. The small party defended themselves bravely, but it was a hopeless struggle. Mons. Courtin therefore wrote to Mr. Scrafton, the English resident at Murshidabad, offering to surrender himself and his followers as prisoners of war.[21] Mr. Scrafton in anticipation of the Select Committee's acceptance of this offer requested the Nawab to send a 'parwanah' to Mir Qasim directing him to stop the hostilities.[22] The Select Committee approved of Mr. Scrafton's action, and accepted Mons. Courtin's offer of surrender.[23] The party surrendered early in March, 1758.[24] This seems to have been the only occasion when Mir Qasim was called upon to take the field in his own district, and beyond surrounding the Frenchmen with the help of a large army,[25] he had nothing else to do.

When Bengal was being simultaneously attacked early in 1759 from the north-west by the Shahzadah, and from the south-west by the Marathas under Sheo Bhat, the position was indeed critical for Mir Jafar.[26] Once again, the services of his son-in-law were requisitioned towards the end of February.[27] He was directed to proceed to Patna,[28] but

[21] Mr. Scrafton to the Select Committee, Feb. 18, 1758.

[22] Beng. Sel. Com., Feb. 22, 1758.

[23] *Ibid.*, Feb. 22, 1758.

[24] *Ibid.*, March 20, 1758.

[25] In his letter to "A Messieurs du Conseil de la Royall Compagnie D'Angleterre, A Calcutta," Mons. Courtin pointedly refers to "L'armee de Cachemeli Kan, Nabob de Rangepour" (*vide* Beng. Sel. Com., Feb. 22, 1758).

[26] Beng. Sel. Com., Jan. 25, Feb. 10, and April 20, 1759.

[27] Abs. P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 25.

[28] Abs. P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 6.

while he was encamped[29] on the river Damodar with his troops, Kamgar Khan, one of the principal lieutenants of the Shahzadah, hurried to surprise him.[30] That Mir Qasim was no general is evident from the fact that he had foolishly led his men to a dangerously isolated point without keeping watch on the movements of the enemy in the neighbourhood. He had, however, a narrow escape. Being informed of the approach of Kamgar Khan, he retreated precipitately to join the main army of Mir Jafar. A part of his force that happened to be in the rear was intercepted and overpowered by the enemy. It is significant that after this inglorious retreat Mir Qasim took no part in the military operations that followed. Even if he had distinguished himself, it is doubtful whether he would have been entrusted with a responsible command so long as his rival, Miran, was in charge of the Nawab's affairs. It was merely on the score of his relationship with the Nawab that he held even nominal commands. His lack of an aptitude for war was the chief handicap that prevented him from gaining any distinction.

It was during the hostilities between the English and the Dutch in November, 1759, that Mir Qasim was next ordered[31] by the Nawab to march on Chinsura in order to demolish its new fortifications. The task was simple, yet Mir Qasim failed to complete it with sufficient promptness and zeal. Mr. Holwell wrote, "In the apparent delays of this service, Cossim Allee Cawn suffered much in the opinion of the late president . . . ." Mir Qasim's pro-

[29] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 680).

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 681.

[31] Holwell's Memorial, Beng. Sel. Com., Aug. 4, 1760, Vansittart's Narrative, I, pp. 54, 55.

crastination and inefficiency were, however, explained away by Mr. Holwell[32] in his elaborate minute submitted to the Select Committee. He urged that Mir Qasim's dilatory tactics had been really prompted by the Nawab himself, and that the former had been unjustly blamed by Clive.

In the beginning of 1760, the Shahzadah again invaded Bihar; and on Clive's departure Caillaud had to take the field against him along with Miran. At this juncture, the Marathas again entered Bengal, and appeared in the vicinity of Burdwan[33] to make a diversion in favour of the Shahzadah. The Nawab again deputed his son-in-law to defend the Burdwan country from the Marathas. Mir Qasim marched at the head of about 1,500 of the Nawab's troops towards the end of February.[34] Under the instructions of the Nawab, a body of the Company's troops joined Mir Qasim.[35] The latter reached Burdwan by the middle of March[36] and there he received orders from the Nawab to march[37] at once against Sheo Bhat.

Mir Qasim was obviously not the right person for this task, as he had never shown the least talent for military operations. He was absolutely unworthy of the command now given to him. In spite of a sufficiently large force, he dared not make head against the invaders, but on the

[32] Beng. Sel. Com., Aug. 4, 1760.

[33] Beng. Sel. Com., Feb. 25, 1760.

[34] Holwell to Caillaud, Feb. 24, 1760, (*vide* India Tracts, p. 27).

[35] Beng. Sel. Com., Feb. 25, 1760.

[36] Holwell to Hastings, March 15, 1760, (*vide* India Tracts, p. 31).

[37] Holwell to Hastings, March 21, 1760, (*vide* India Tracts, p. 31).

contrary remained hanging about Katwa. A vigorous offensive would have saved the neighbouring country from the ravages of the Marathas, but Mir Qasim failed to launch a bold attack against the enemy from his excessive timidity and nervousness. Ultimately he was ordered to retreat, when he should have advanced towards the south to drive out the Marathas from the country.[38] The result was disastrous. The country adjacent to Burdwan was ruthlessly pillaged by the invaders, and there was an enormous loss of revenue in consequence. Mr. Holwell held Mir Jafar alone to have been responsible for Mir Qasim's failure to stop the Maratha inroads.[39] According to him, the Nawab's own "pusillanimous, irregular, and contradictory orders" hampered Mir Qasim, and finally obliged the latter to retreat to Murshidabad. Mr. Holwell's attempt to defend the conduct of his own 'protege' does not carry conviction. His profound aversion to Mir Jafar blinded him to the pusillanimity and incapacity of Mir Qasim whose cause[40] he had openly espoused, and whose actions he consistently sought to defend.

It appears that Mir Qasim had been more intent on securing the post of a minister than on distinguishing himself on the battle-field, but the jealousy of his brother-in-law was a bar to his progress. For obvious reasons Miran could not have tolerated the rise of his brother-in-law, hence Mir Qasim could not secure the post of Naib at Patna,

[38] Holwell's Minute, Beng. Sel. Com., Aug. 4, 1760.

[39] *Ibid.*

[40] Holwell to Caillaud, May 5, 1760, (*vide* India Tracts, p. 56).

which he eagerly coveted.[41] In fact, the post held by Ramnarayan had also been sought by the Nawab's brother-in-law, Mir Qasim Ali Khan, but the latter also failed to supplant Ramnarayan in spite of the Nawab's support.[42] Clive managed to effect a reconciliation between Ramnarayan and Mir Jafar, and got the former confirmed in his appointment.[43] Mir Qasim Ali Khan had intrigued against the Naib, till he was murdered in December, 1758, at the instance of Miran.[44] The death of his namesake had removed the principal competitor from the way of Mir Qasim, and the latter realised that the support of the English alone could neutralise Miran's opposition. In order to seek the assistance of the English, Mir Qasim actively canvassed for the support of Clive and Hastings,[45] and finally succeeded in winning over Holwell when the latter became the President after Clive's departure. It is interesting to note that Clive, before he left Bengal, had expressed his approbation of Mir Qasim's pretensions to the post of Ramnarayan, and it was on the ground of his recommendation that Holwell ostensibly espoused the cause of Mir Qasim.[46]

While Mir Qasim was engaged in maturing his scheme of securing the Naibship of Patna, a most unexpected and dramatic event occurred. On the 3rd of July, Miran was

[41] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 697).

[42] Beng. Sel. Com., Feb. 18, 1758.

[43] Beng. Sel. Com., March 2, 20 and 31, 1758.

[44] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 689). Holwell's Minute, Beng. Sel. Com., Aug. 4, 1760.

[45] Hastings to Caillaud, Jan. 18, 1760. Caillaud to Clive, Jan. 24, 1760, (*vide* Prof. Dodwell's "Dupleix and Clive," p. 195).

[46] Holwell's India Tracts, p. 56.

accidentally killed by lightning.[47] This completely altered the position of Mir Qasim. A thunderbolt removed the biggest obstacle from his path, and he now became one of the most prominent persons in the Nawab's family. The Nawab had two minor illegitimate sons, and an infant grandson who too was the child of a concubine of Miran. Under the circumstances, Mir Qasim naturally came into prominence, being the husband of the only surviving legitimate daughter of the Nawab. Thus, the sudden demise of Miran was bound to widen the scope of his ambition. The Naibship of Bihar was now a secondary consideration. Mir Qasim hoped to succeed to the posts held by the late[48] Chota Nawab. Mir Jafar was almost crushed by grief at the premature death of his eldest son. He was so much affected[49] by the bereavement that he seems to have even lost his reason temporarily. The affairs of the government fell into a state of utter confusion. The Nawab no longer attended to his duties. The troops in Bihar, who had not been paid for some time past, became mutinous, and Caillaud pacified them with great difficulty.[50] Matters were

[47] There is a difference of opinion as regards the date of Miran's death. According to Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 689), it is "19th of Zil-qada 1173" (4th July). Ironside in his Narrative (Asiatic Annual Register, 1800) gives the date as the 2nd July. It was 3rd according to Caillaud and Hastings. Vansittart also gives this date (Narrative, I, p. 33). *Vide* also Beng. Sel. Com., July 28, 1760.

[48] Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 40.

[49] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 691). Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 235), Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 732). Jami-ut-Tawarikh (Elliot, VIII, p. 429). Chahar Gulzar Shujai (Elliot, VIII, p. 214).

[50] Beng. Sel. Com., Aug. 18, 1760.

still more serious at Murshidabad.[51] Owing to financial difficulties, there was a regular crisis at the capital. The Nawab's liabilities amounted to two crores of rupees, and the troops were clamorous for the huge arrears of their pay.[52] The Raja of Birbhum desirous of fishing in troubled waters threatened to advance against Murshidabad, while the Marathas too ravaged the neighbourhood of Burdwan. The death of the heir-apparent at this hour intensified the general chaos. The old Nawab was powerless to handle the situation bravely. There was no one else in his family who could have done so. This was a golden opportunity for Mir Qasim who determined to exploit it to his fullest advantage. Shrewd, diplomatic, and unscrupulous as he was, he knew that his life's chance had come at last, and it was too valuable to be lost.

The confusion in the capital reached its inevitable climax, when the disorderly troops openly mutinied,[53] and besieged the Nawab in the 'Chihil Satun' palace. They had frequently surrounded the palace in the past, but in vain. Their demands had not been satisfied, and even their vile abuses had created no effect, but when the sepoys received the intelligence of Miran's death, they became

[51] Mir Qasim's own Narrative, *vide* Trans. P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 38, p. 54, Vansittart's Narrative, I, pp. 34—41.

[52] First Report from the Select Committee, 1773, p. 155. "Three crores and forty lakhs," according to Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 345).

[53] Trans. P.L.R., Jan.-Sept. 1763, No. 38. Vansittart's Narrative, I, pp. 34—41. Beng. Sel. Com., July 28, 1760. Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 691). Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 346). Riyazu-s-Salatin (A.S.B. Text, p. 380), Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 733).

uncontrollable. On July 14, they surrounded the palace in an angry mood, insulted the principal officials, and even molested the treasurer and the other 'mutasaddis.' Such disorders continued even on the next day. On the 16th, their attitude became still more violent. They besieged the gates of the palace, and allowed nobody to go inside, or come out. In the meanwhile, groups of sepoys mounted on the walls, violated the sanctity of the 'Zenana,' and threatened to kill the Nawab, unless their grievances were immediately redressed. Those who dared to remonstrate with them against such conduct were freely assaulted. This state of affairs lasted for a few days. Mir Qasim had so long been a silent observer of the grim drama that was being enacted at the capital of Bengal. He now came upon the scene in the character of a saviour of the Government, and appeased the ringleaders of the insurrection by paying from his own treasury three lakhs of rupees. He also volunteered to be security for the rest of the arrears due to the sepoys. It is needless to add that Mir Qasim had not come to the aid of his father-in-law out of sheer generosity. He had agreed to save the situation upon being promised that he would be appointed to the vacant offices of Miran.[54] This at once proves his astuteness and opportunism. He had deliberately kept himself in the background during the commencement of the mutiny, and he made his entry as a peacemaker[55] long afterwards just to impress the people, and win over the troops in a dramatic fashion. Having saved the city and the Nawab from a dire calamity, Mir Qasim became the hero of the hour.

[54] Vansittart's Narrative, I, pp. 41-2.
[55] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 691).

Mir Jafar's promise to nominate his son-in-law as his successor had not been meant to be kept, and the latter was soon disillusioned. The Nawab was too suspicious to have trusted Mir Qasim for long, and he thought it best to remove the latter from Murshidabad on some fair pretext. Mir Qasim was now invested with the Faujdari of Purnea, and the infant son of Miran, Mir Saidu, was named the heir-apparent with Rajballabh as his Diwan.[56] It was at the instance of Caillaud that the Nawab apparently refused to recognise Mir Qasim as his heir.[57] Caillaud had represented that the army 'jamadars' wanted Miran's son to succeed the Nawab,[58] and Rajballabh to remain Diwan as before. Caillaud did not support the appointment of Mir Qasim as Diwan on two grounds.[59] Firstly, he rightly argued that if Mir Qasim were raised to the Diwanship, his relationship would make him almost equal to the Nawab, and the little child might be ignored. Secondly, Clive had meant Mir Qasim to be the Naib of Patna in case Ramnarayan willingly resigned to be made the Ray Rayan, for an artful man like the latter could not long be trusted at Patna, whereas his proficiency in revenue accounts would make him an admirable Ray Rayan.

Mir Qasim's disappointment was bitter indeed. His hopes to succeed the Nawab seemed to be shattered. There

[56] *Vide* Letter from Mr. Sykes, dated Cassimbazar, Aug. 8, 1760. Beng. Sel. Com., Aug. 11, 1760, also, Siyar, p. 691.

[57] Abs. P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 24.

[58] Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 41.

[59] Beng. Sel. Com., Aug. 18, 1760. (Letter from Mr. Amyatt and Col. Caillaud.)

were only two alternatives open to him now. Either he should be content with the Faujdari of Rangpur and Purnea, or he must have recourse to diplomacy and intrigue in order to gain his object. Mir Qasim was too ambitious to pass his days as a common Faujdar, and he was too selfish to be deterred from his purpose by moral scruples alone. He resolved to secure the masnad of Murshidabad by fair means or foul.

CHAPTER II

MIR QASIM'S INTRIGUES AGAINST MIR JAFAR

The accidental death[1] of Miran was the signal for an endless intrigue. Mir Qasim could now safely proceed with his scheme of effecting a revolution at Murshidabad. The distracted condition of the Nawab's affairs was just the opportunity that he needed. His intrigues against the Nawab are too significant to be overlooked. The part he played in the deposition of Mir Jafar has not been correctly estimated. On a closer examination of the evidence, it will be found that it was he, and not Mr. Holwell, or Mr. Vansittart, who first conceived the idea of a revolution, and realized its practicability. It was he who suggested and arranged every detail of the scheme. Mr. Vansittart merely played the game of Mir Qasim.

[1] Miran was killed by lightning, but foul play was suspected. Mir Qasim was accused of having got his rival assassinated. Even Burke, while addressing the House of Lords during the impeachment of Warren Hastings, spoke with his usual rhetoric, 'My Lords, thus was the Gordian knot cut. The prince dies by this flash of lightning. There were at that time, it seems, in Calcutta a wicked sceptical set of people who, somehow or other, believed that human agency was concerned in this.' (*Vide* Speeches of the Managers and Counsel in the trial of Warren Hastings, edited by E. A. Bond, Vol. I, p. 60). There is a footnote in Burke's MS.—'Many believed at that time . . . that the Nawab had been murdered by some emissaries of Cossim Ali Khan'. It must be admitted, however, that there is no direct evidence to prove Mir Qasim's complicity in any such affair. Jean Law, a contemporary and a shrewd observer, disbelieved the story of Miran's accidental death and thought he had been murdered (*vide* his 'Memoire' edited by Martineau, Paris, p. 452).

It is interesting to note that he proceeded against Mir Jafar in almost the same way as Mir Jafar had done against Sirajuddaulah. The only material difference in his case was that he had no control over the Nawab's army. Although this was a serious handicap, he did not allow himself to be deterred by this. He could, at any rate, resort to diplomacy and intrigue. He availed himself of the discontent that prevailed in the army against the Nawab, and seduced it to a great extent. The Mutiny of the troops at Murshidabad had given him an excellent opportunity of earning their good will by promptly paying up from his own pocket a part of the arrears due to them.[2] He employed his friend, Ali Ibrahim Khan, for winning over the Nawab's officers, ministers and other prominent nobles.[3] Two of the most prominent Hindu officials, who had played no small part in the late revolution of 1757 were again in the fore-front of the discontented party. One of them, Rai Durlabh, was soon won over. The other, Rajballabh, too supported the cause of Mir Qasim. The Seths[4] who had played an important part in the overthrow of Sirajuddaulah also wished for a change in the government, and agreed to support the cause of Mir Qasim.

[2] Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 733).
Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh of Kalyan Singh.
(J.B.O.R.S., Vol. V, p. 346.)
Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 691).
Riyazu-s-Salatin (A.S.B. Text, p. 380).
Vansittart's Narrative, I, pp. 34—41.
Beng. Sel. Com., July 28, 1760 (*vide* Letters from Warren Hastings, dated, Morad Bagh, July 18 and 25, 1760).

[3] Siyar, pp. 691 and 693.

[4] Riyazu-s-Salatin, p. 380, Siyar, p. 694.

Sure of his ground at Murshidabad, he turned to the English for help. The revolution of 1757 had taught him a valuable lesson. He therefore cultivated the friendship of the Company's officials at Kasimbazar.[5] He won the good opinion of Mr. Hastings, the Resident at Murshidabad. To crown all, he even secured the good will of Clive who recommended him for the post held by Ramnarayan at Patna.[6] After Clive's departure, Mir Qasim with characteristic shrewdness won the support of Mr. Holwell, and wrote[7] to him frequently about his desires. Being assured of the latter's friendship, he paid a visit to him sometime during the last week of February, 1760.[8] The real object of this visit cannot, however, be ascertained, but what is significant is this that soon afterwards Mr. Holwell openly espoused the claim of Mir Qasim to the office held by Miran, and requested Col. Caillaud to support the cause of his candidate. How far Mir Qasim's diplomacy had succeeded can be best judged from Mr. Holwell's letter to Col. Caillaud, dated May 5, 1760, wherein he wrote, 'I shall receive as a favour your interesting yourself in behalf of Cossim Aly Khan."[9]

The immediate issue was the problem in regard to the respective rights to future succession of Mir Qasim, and Mir Saidu, the illegitimate son of Miran. Col. Caillaud and Mr. Amyatt were in favour of the latter,[10] but Mr. Holwell

[5] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., Vol. V, p, 345).

[6] Holwell's 'Refutation of a letter.'

[7] Holwell's 'Address to the Proprietors of East India Stock.'

[8] Holwell's 'Letter to Caillaud', February 24, 1760, (*vide* Tracts, p. 27).

[9] Holwell's Address, p. 56.

[10] Vansittart's Narrative, I, pp. 41 and 68.

and the Select Committee at Calcutta pressed the claims of Mir Qasim. Both Mr. Holwell and Mr. Hastings were persuaded by Mir Qasim to request the Nawab to appoint him as his successor. The Nawab thus replied to Mr. Holwell,[11] 'you acquaint me that he (Qasim Ali) is a noble, good, and brave man. Mr. Hastings also has wrote me to the same purpose, and has desired me to let him succeed my son. This rejoiced me much, because I was sensible he is highly deserving of my favour and friendship. I have no friends dearer to me than himself and family, but the Colonel has wrote me a letter . . . . you will then be able to judge what motive has induced me to prefer the Chota Nawab's son.' Mr. Hastings, however, wrote to the Select Committee, arguing at length in favour of Mir Qasim's[12] claims.

In all his intrigues against the Nawab, Mir Qasim could count upon the unfailing help of Mr. Holwell owing to the latter's inveterate hatred and pique against Mir Jafar.[13] Apart from personal reasons, Mr. Holwell was convinced that Mir Jafar had completely failed as a ruler, and that his misrule would lead to the ruin of the Company's affairs in Bengal.[14] In addition, he framed specific charges against the Nawab of faithlessness, and actual treason.[15]

[11] Abs. P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 24.

[12] Gleig's Memoir, Vol. I, p. 89.

[13] First Report, 1772, p. 161, and Caillaud's letter to a friend, Orme. MSS. (India, xii, ff. 32, 39, etc.) (*vide* Prof. Dodwell's Dupleix and Clive, p. 205).

[14] Holwell's Address, p. 10.

[15] Holwell's 'Memorial.'
,, 'Refutation of a letter.'
,, 'Important Facts.'

That he gave up his original scheme[16] of securing the Subahdari for the Company from the Emperor was due to the successful intrigue of Mir Qasim. The latter also won over the two Armenian merchants, Khoja Gregory and Khoja Petruse who had been the agents of the English in their negotiations against Sirajuddaulah, and employed them as his confidential agents in his secret negotiations with the Select Committee at Calcutta.[17] The only thing which worried him was the Nawab's prejudice against himself,[18] and so he secretly prepared for an open rebellion as the last alternative,[19] especially when he saw that the Nawab entrusted the affairs of the Government to a Persian adventurer, Mirza Daud.[20] Matters were in this state when Mr. Vansittart arrived as the permanent Governor of Fort William. Mir Qasim decided to go to Calcutta[21] to win over the new Governor with the help of Mr. Holwell.

Mir Qasim now simply needed a good pretext to go down to Calcutta. In his very first letter to Mr. Vansittart he expressed the desire for an interview.[22] Besides writing frequently[23] to the governor, he wrote more freely to Mr. Holwell.[24] Mr. Vansittart was at last induced to invite Mir Qasim on some convenient plea.[25] One was suggested

[16] Holwell's Address, pp. 59, 60, 63.
[17] Abs. P.L.R., 1759—65, pp. 2 and 19.
[18] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., Vol. V, p. 344) and Siyar, p. 691.
[19] Siyar, p. 694.
[20] Vansittart's Narrative, Vol. I, p. 42.
[21] J.B.O.R.S., Vol. V, p. 346. (Khulasat.)
[22] Abs. P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 45.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[24] Holwell's Address, p. 88.
[25] Abs. P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 7.

by Mir Qasim himself,[26] and this was finally approved.[27] It was the question of adjusting the operations of the next campaign against the Shahzadah, and finally settling the accounts of the assigned lands.[28] Mir Jafar who had already begun to suspect the designs of his son-in-law, was unwilling to let him go to Calcutta.[29] Pressed by the Governor, he had to yield. In the meantime, Mir Qasim had deputed Khoja Gregory on a confidential mission to Calcutta.[30] He personally set out from Murshidabad early in September, and reached Calcutta on the 15th of September.[31] No sooner had he arrived at Calcutta than he requested the Governor to grant him a private interview.[32] The meeting took place on the same night.[33]

During the interview, Mir Qasim expressed his apprehension of Col. Caillaud's designs, and referred to the latter as his enemy.[34] Mr. Vansittart assured him of his sympathy. Mir Qasim thereupon adroitly declared his desire to obtain the management of the Nawab's affairs to which Mr. Vansittart did not object.[35] Mir Qasim subsequently suggested that he would relieve the financial distress of the Company by making territorial assignments, if he

[26] Holwell's Address, p. 89.
[27] Abs. P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 37.
[28] *Ibid.*, and Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 43.
[29] Siyar, p. 691, J.B.O.R.S., Vol. V, p. 346. (Khulasat.)
[30] Abs. P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 2.
[31] Abs. P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 7.
[32] Abs. P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 2.
[33] Beng. Sel. Com., Sept. 16, 1760.
[34] Holwell's Address, p. 89.
[35] Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 96.

were entrusted with the control of the administration. He warned the Governor that the Nawab would surely oppose his elevation, and emphasized the need of coercing the Nawab and his ministers. In other words, Mir Qasim asked for military help, and ultimately convinced Mr. Vansittart of the supreme necessity of a radical change in the Nawab's government.

The success of Mir Qasim's diplomacy was due to a combination of circumstances. The treasury at Calcutta was exhausted, and the normal expenses of the settlement could not be provided for.[36] The monthly subsidy of the Nawab was considerably in arrears. No remittances were expected from England, and the investments had been stopped. The cost of the upkeep of the Bengal army was far more than the allotted revenues.[37] There was no prospect of peace in Bihar owing to the presence of the Shahzadah. To make matters worse, the Nawab was demanding the return of the assigned districts.[38] The company was now also engaged in a decisive struggle with the French in the south, and the presidencies of Bombay and Madras depended on supplies from Bengal. The consequence was that the Council at Calcutta had to borrow heavily to meet the expenses.[39] Mr. Vansittart was thus hard pressed for want of money.[40] He was not sure of the Nawab's payments, and did not know how to provide funds for Madras.[41] The

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 36.
[37] Beng. Sel. Com., Sept. 11, 1760.
[38] Abs. P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 27.
[39] 'A Letter to the Proprietors of East Indian Stock from Henry Vansittart,' p. 12.
[40] 'Vindication of Mr. Holwell by his friends,' p. 74.
[41] Beng. Sel. Com., August 7, 1760.

select committee resolved, 'It becomes necessary to secure to the company such an income as will bear them clear of charges, and bring in besides a supply for the emergencies of their other settlements, and for providing cargoes for loading home their ship.'[42] The immediate problem was how to secure such an income! Mr. Vansittart had appealed to the Nawab for the grant of the Faujdarship of Sylhet and Chittagong;[43] and for the cession of Burdwan and Krishnanagar,[44] but in vain. The governor expostulated fruitlessly, as the Nawab was obdurate.[45] Foiled in his attempt to win over the Nawab, he considered the expedient of negotiating with the Shahzadah. This policy had originally been advocated by Mr. Holwell,[46] but Mr. Vansittart, unlike Mr. Holwell, was opposed to the idea of a revolution in Bengal. The Select Committee finally resolved,[47] 'That the entering into an alliance with the Shahzadah is a necessary and expedient measure.' Thus it is evident that neither Mr. Vansittart, nor the Select Committee had up to September 15, 1760, any desire for bringing about a revolution at Murshidabad. On the contrary, Mr. Vansittart had set his face against any such step. Mir Qasim saw the plight of the Calcutta Government, and determined to exploit it for his own benefit. He held out a helping hand to the Governor, and the latter without correctly grasping the

[42] Beng. Sel. Com., Sept. 11, 1760.

[43] Abs. P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 36.

[44] Letter from Mr. Vansittart to Col. Caillaud, Aug. 4, 1760.

[45] Letter from Mr. Sykes, Sept. 16, 1760 and Abs. P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 37.

[46] Holwell's 'Interesting Events', Part I, p. 183.

[47] Beng. Sel. Com., Sept. 15, 1760.

situation at Murshidabad, merely played into his hands. He seems to have thought in the beginning that Mir Qasim meant to have for the present the Diwani alone, and so readily fell in with the latter's proposal.[48] He did not realize at the outset that Mir Qasim really aimed at the Subahdari also. In the meantime, Rai Durlabh approved[49] of the promotion of Mir Qasim to the Diwani, when he was consulted by the Select Committee. Khoja Petruse now acted as the intermediary between Mir Qasim, and the Select Committee.[50]

After some meetings with the Governor, Mir Qasim had a private interview with Mr. Holwell on September 25.[51] It was on this occasion that he formally discussed his real objects and plans. In fact, Mr. Holwell was not even prepared for such views as were now expressed by the latter. He thus sums up the latter's views: 'He urged the repeated treacherous conduct of the Suba and the late young Nabob to the English, expatiated on their cruelties and murders, and the universal abhorrence of the people against the Suba and his house; dwelt much on his personal ingratitude to himself; in his two attempts which he had made on his life at the instigation of the late young Nabob; exclaimed against the secret negotiation he had carried on with the Shahzadah and the Dutch, closing this introduction with saying that the Suba was incapable of government; that no

[48] First Report, pp. 230-31.

[49] Beng. Sel. Com., Sept. 16, 1760.

[50] Vansittart's 'Letter to the Proprietors of East India Stock,' p. 142.

[51] Holwell's Tracts—Address, p. 90. 'He discovered his views were more extensive than had been imagined.'

faith or trust could be put in him.' In short, Mir Qasim made out a strong case against the Nawab.[52] Mr. Holwell's account of this interview further shows that Mir Qasim even proposed the assassination of the old Nawab.[53] This idea was dropped at the instance of Mr. Holwell himself.[54] That Mir Qasim suggested the murder of the Nawab shows how unscrupulous he was. When he found Mr. Holwell horrified by his inhuman proposal, he expressed his profound disappointment and declared that the latter 'was not so much his friend as he had hoped and expected.'[55]

This account could not obviously have been concocted by Mr. Holwell, as the latter was his friend and advocate. He had no reason for defaming him falsely. Mr. Holwell, however, contradicted himself in a roundabout manner subsequently only to defend his protege,[56] and to vindicate the revolution of 1760. Even then he used ambiguous language, and merely refuted a fresh charge levelled against Mir Qasim. Certain gentlemen of the Calcutta Council sent a memorial[57] in 1762, in which they alleged that after his accession to the masnad, Mir Qasim had attempted to murder Mir Jafar. Mr. Holwell denied that Mr. Qasim could do anything of that kind during his occupation of the palace at Murshidabad. He should not therefore be taken

[52] Kalyan Singh corroborates the statement of Mr. Holwell. (*Vide* Khulasat, J.B.O.R.S., Vol. V, p. 346).

[53] Holwell's Address, p. 90, and Scrafton's Observations, p. 26.

[54] Holwell's Tracts, p. 91.

[55] *Ibid.*

[56] Holwell's Refutation (Tracts, p. 114).

[57] First Report, 1772, pp. 251-257.

to mean that even the aforesaid proposal had not been made at Calcutta. It is clear that in his Refutation of a Letter[58] Mr. Holwell merely denied the subsequent charge.

After the preliminaries were over, there was a discussion on the articles of a secret treaty to be concluded between Mir Qasim and the company. A study of the main terms[59] of the treaty shows that the former secured all the advantages that he wanted. Besides, what is more significant, he also succeeded in his consistent opposition to the proposed alliance with the Shahzadah. Thus, Mir Qasim completely upset the plans of the Select Committee, and obliged the latter to play the part chalked out by himself. On the night of the 27th September, the treaty agreed upon was duly signed by Mir Qasim and the Select Committee. Mir Qasim then offered to reward the Select Committee for their good-will, but Mr. Vansittart gracefully declined the proffered bribe for the present.[60]

Mir Qasim's intrigues were now crowned with success. He had deliberately betrayed the trust reposed in him by the Nawab, as he had no right to conclude a secret treaty which meant the virtual deposition of the latter. The Nawab had recently written to the governor expressing his

[58] It must be understood that Mr. Holwell did not actually contradict his original statement in his 'Address'. His 'Refutation of a Letter' was published as a supplement to his 'Address'. He could easily have suppressed the passage in question from his Address if he had so intended. Even in his Refutation occurs this significant sentence, 'Supposing this charge to be really true surely it will bear some explanation when the provocation is considered'. Did Mr. Holwell intend to slur over the guilt of his hero?

[59] Aitchison's Treaties, Engagements, and Sunnuds, Vol. I, p. 42.

[60] Holwell's Tracts, p. 120. First Report, p. 161.

intention of bestowing a 'sardarship' on his son-in-law,[61] little did he anticipate that Mir Qasim was returning from Calcutta recognized as the de facto Nawab of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

[61] Abs. P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 27.

CHAPTER III

THE REVOLUTION OF 1760 AT MURSHIDABAD

The deposition of Mir Jafar in 1760 is a drama of supreme interest in the history of Bengal during the eighteenth century. It was fraught with momentous consequences so far as the Nawabs of Murshidabad were concerned; and it was the prelude to the permanent establishment of the British power in Hindustan. Mir Qasim, the scheming son-in-law of Mir Jafar, was the chief actor in this drama, and Mr. Vansittart who wanted a reformation of the Nawab's government was ultimately obliged to acquiesce in a virtual revolution.

Before concluding his secret treaty with the Select Committee at Calcutta, Mir Qasim had made it clear in the course of his conversations[1] with Mr. Vansittart that his elevation would be resented by the old Nawab, and that force should have to be employed to coerce the Nawab and his counsellors. The Committee in order to placate him, and thus secure financial relief for the Company's affairs had agreed to adopt the measures suggested by him,[2] because there was no other alternative but to comply with the wishes of their new ally.[3] Mr. Vansittart would certainly not have sent a part of the Company's military forces to Murshidabad, if he had not been definitely instructed to do so by Mir

[1] Beng. Sel. Com., September 16, 1760.

[2] Vansittart's Narrative, Vol. I, p. 107.

[3] Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 732).

Qasim who was perfectly sure of opposition from his father-in-law. Mr. Vansittart and Col. Caillaud left Calcutta on October 2, 1760, along with two companies of Europeans, a company of artillery, and a battalion of sepoys with the express purpose of keeping Mir Qasim firm to the agreements he had entered into, and of supporting him against the Nawab.[4] In order to remove any suspicions that the latter might entertain, it was represented to him[5] that the troops were to be sent to reinforce the army at Patna, and that the Governor was going to pay him a visit,[6] and settle the mutual affairs. Meanwhile Mir Qasim had already reached Murshidabad, and was busy making preparations for the success of his scheme.[7] A body of soldiers and retainers[8] was collected by him, and the discontented factions at the capital were asked to remain prepared for any eventuality. Mir Jafar unaware of these pressed the Governor more than once to come immediately, and offered him a hearty welcome.[9] Mir Qasim also wrote to him expressing his pleasure on hearing about his departure.[10]

[4] Vansittart's Narrative, Vol. I, p. 108.
Beng. Sel. Com., September 27, 1760.
Holwell's India Tracts, p. 59.
Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 693).
Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., Vol. V, p. 347).
Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 54.
Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 27.

[5] Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 37.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] Siyar, p. 693.

[8] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 304).

[9] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 27.
Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 28.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

The Governor reached Kasimbazar on October 14 in the evening, and took up his quarters at Moradbagh.[11] On the next morning at about nine, the Nawab came on the usual ceremonial visit. After the usual ceremonies were over, Mr. Vansittart[12] raised the question of the Nawab's administrative difficulties, and pointed to the disordered state of his government and finances. He finally announced his proposal of appointing Mir Qasim as the Nawab's Deputy, but Mir Jafar showed great uneasiness, and refused to agree to this suggestion.[13]

The Governor in the course of his talks tried to impress him with the imperative need of reforming the various abuses that had crept into the government. In order to convince him of this, Mr. Vansittart even exaggerated those evils, as he himself admits with remarkable frankness, "I described everything in the worst light I could, hoping, that by magnifying his difficulties, I might bring him more easily to consent to those measures which we have resolved upon."[14] It must not be forgotten that there was an acute crisis at

[11] Vansittart, Vol. I, p. 110.
Siyar, p. 694.

[12] Siyar, p. 694.

[13] Mr. Vansittart both in his Narrative, I (p. 109) and in his Letter to the Select Committee, dated Kasimbazar, October 15, 1760, suggests that during this first interview the Nawab was not unwilling to consider his suggestion. Ghulam Husain (Siyar, p. 694), however, gives a different account. According to him, the Nawab refused "absolutely to give his consent to the regulation which the other (Mr. Vansittart) proposed." It seems, therefore, that the Nawab must have given some formal or evasive reply to please his honoured guest, which the latter might have understood to mean a virtual acquiescence in his proposal. The Nawab would certainly not have expressed his clear willingness to accept Mir Qasim as his deputy.

[14] Vansittart's Letter to the Select Committee, October 15, 1760.

Patna due to the Nawab's negligence in sending his remittances properly. Something was to be done promptly which might avert the ruin that stared in the face of the unpaid troops of the Company in Bihar.[15] That was why he wanted to arrive at some quick settlement with the vacillating Nawab. The Nawab, however, did not commit himself in any manner, and took his leave in an uneasy mood.[16]

Then followed Mr. Vansittart's return visit to the Nawab on October 16, and the conversation was purely informal.[17] Formal discussions commenced in a conference between the Nawab and the Governor on October 18 at Moradbagh. It was on this occasion that the latter raised the real points at issue. The Nawab was definitely told that he must agree to some method of reforming his administration. Besides, the Governor handed over to the Nawab three letters wherein the former had discussed the various abuses of the Nawab's government, and had emphasized the need of a speedy reformation. These letters[18] referred mainly to the following abuses:—

(*i*) The English forces at Patna were kept without their pay;

(*ii*) The Nawab's own troops were openly disaffected for want of their pay;

[15] Mr. Amyatt's Letter to the Governor from Patna, October 4, 1760; and Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 733).

[16] Siyar, p. 694.

[17] Vansittart, I, p. 115.

[18] Vansittart, I, pp. 125—34. English translations of these letters are given in the Narrative.

(*iii*) The troops at Murshidabad had threatened the life and safety of the Nawab again for want of their pay;

(*iv*) The Nawab's ministers and advisers were selfish, and tyrannical, and were oppressing the people;

(*v*) Owing to maladministration, there was an acute scarcity of provisions;

(*vi*) The "Sikkahs" issued at Calcutta were not being allowed by the officers of the Government to pass current without payment of a "battah";

(*vii*) The war with the Shahzadah could not be brought to a successful conclusion owing to the lack of proper co-operation on the part of the Nawab and his government.

It is clear from the enumeration of the above complaints that the Governor had a strong case, and that he was right when he suggested,[19] ". . . . it is proper that you appoint some capable person from among your children, in the place and dignity of your said son, who may take charge of all these affairs, regulate the business of the country, and remove all these difficulties that your Excellency, freed from all the troubles, and fatigues of these transactions, may remain without care and uneasiness . . . ." In short, the Governor advised the old Nawab to drive out his evil counsellors, and in their place appoint a more capable and

[19] Translation of the Third Letter presented to Mir Jafar, October 18, 1760.

reliable person. The Nawab was unwilling to come to an immediate decision, and wanted to gain time. He was possibly annoyed by the abruptness with which those complaints had been made,[20] and did not like to be dictated to in this manner by a person to whom he was not bound by any personal tie of gratitude or friendship. He expostulated on the ground of his old age, and grief, and asked for permission to consult his advisers.[21] Mr. Vansittart would not allow him to go back to his evil counsellors, and requested him to consult some of his trustworthy relations. The sole purpose of the Governor was to persuade the Nawab to send for his son-in-law spontaneously. Eventually, Mir Jafar named several of his relations on whose advice he could rely—of these Mir Qasim was one. Mr. Vansittart induced the Nawab to accept the latter as his deputy, but in spite of all persuasion on his part, the Nawab showed such unwillingness to seek the assistance of his son-in-law that the Governor was convinced of the necessity of using some sort of force. He, however, sent for Mir Qasim, but the Nawab felt so tired and impatient that he could wait no longer, and left for his palace.[22] Obviously, the Nawab wanted to avoid an interview with his son-in-law, and thus departed before the latter could arrive.

It was now a difficult situation for Mr. Vansittart. He had expected that the Nawab would gladly abide by his instructions, and that there would not be any serious

[20] A letter from certain gentlemen of the Council at Bengal to the Honourable the Secret Committee, p. 4.

[21] Vansittart, 1, p. 116, and his Letter to the Proprietors of East India Stock, p. 26.

[22] Vansittart, I, p. 117. Siyar, p. 694.

necessity for coercing him. His calculations had gone wrong, and he now found that his hopes of a peaceful reformation[23] were going to be shattered. It was certainly an anxious hour for him. He had to choose between cancelling his agreement with Mir Qasim, and employing force to intimidate the Nawab. Shortly after the departure of the Nawab, Mir Qasim came to see Mr. Vansittart, and was informed of all that had passed in the conference. He was extremely disappointed that matters had taken such a turn,[24] and feared that the Governor might in the end refuse to offend the Nawab. His apprehensions were hardly groundless. Mr. Vansittart was under the horns of a dilemma, and was visibly wavering. Mir Qasim needed all his astuteness and diplomacy to compel his friend and patron to stand by him at all costs.[25] He could not evidently see all his dreams frustrated by the scruples of Mr. Vansittart. He immediately adopted the suggestion of his best friend, Ali Ibrahim Khan, who had advised him to work upon the fears of the Governor in these words,[26] "Tell Mr. Vansittart whatever is the matter, and whatever you have to say, if he does not consent, then without going home again, send for your troops and money hither, and taking your departure from this very spot, march towards Birbhum, and canton yourself there, act as one revolted, and live by plunder and rapine. As most of the troops are attached to you, and the Emperor and Kamgar Khan shall favourize

[23] First Report, 1772, p. 162 (Sumner's Evidence).

[24] Siyar, p. 694.

[25] Chahar Gulzar Shujai, Elliot, VIII, p. 214.

[26] Siyar, p. 694, and Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, Alld. Univ. MS., p. 734.

your views undoubtedly, it is probable that even in this manner your scheme may chance to succeed."[27] During the long discussion with Mr. Vansittart, Mir Qasim emphatically asserted that he could not retrace his steps,[28] and thus make himself a victim to his father-in-law's wrath.[29] This declaration had the desired effect.[30] Mr. Vansittart realised that there was no option but to overcome the Nawab's obstinacy by a show of force. He decided to give one more day to the Nawab for coming to a decision, and resolved to employ force in the last extremity.[31] The conference came to an end, and Mir Qasim went back reassured and satisfied. His tact and diplomacy had stood him in good stead, and he had the satisfaction of feeling that he had been successful in forcing the hands of the Governor.

Throughout the next day, nothing was heard from the Nawab who maintained an attitude of strange silence and apathy. All that Mr. Vansittart could know was that the Nawab was closely surrounded by his old ministers.[32] Mir Qasim, in the meantime, assembled all his retainers and men, and kept them in readiness. He held anxious consultations with his friends and advisers, and offered his prayers for the success of his venture.[33] When he heard nothing

[27] Siyar, Raymond's Translation, Calcutta Reprint II, pp. 382-3.

[28] Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, Alld. Univ. MS., p. 734, and Siyar, p. 694.

[29] Kalyan Singh too corroborates the account of the Siyar " He said that if the agreement proposed was not kept, it would mean his death." J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 349 (Khulasat).

[30] Siyar, p. 694.

[31] Vansittart, I, p. 118.

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] Siyar, p. 694.

from the Nawab, Mr. Vansittart resolved that Col. Caillaud should cross the river with two companies of military, and six companies of sepoys, and surround the Nawab's palace before daybreak.[34] It was further decided that Mir Qasim should join Col. Caillaud with all his men. Early in the morning on October 20, the combined forces of Col. Caillaud and Mir Qasim surrounded the palace at Murshidabad, and marched into the outer courtyard.[35] The Nawab and his men were taken by surprise. The small force kept to guard the Nawab's palace got panic-stricken, and made no resistance at all. They may have been bribed, and won over by Mir Qasim.[36] The Nawab was now completely cut off from the rest of the capital, as no one could come in, or come out of the palace. Mr. Vansittart anxiously wanted to avoid any bloodshed, and he merely wanted to drive out the former advisers of the Nawab. He wrote to the Nawab saying,[37] "I have sent Col. Caillaud with forces to wait upon you. When the said Colonel arrives, he will expel those bad counsellors, and place your affairs in a proper state, I will shortly follow." The Nawab still refused to yield.[38] Messages were sent to him, and all to no purpose. At last, however, the Nawab had to give way. He sent word in the afternoon, after wavering for hours, that he would abdicate in favour of Mir Qasim on condition

[34] Vansittart, I, p. 119.

[35] "A narrative of what happened in Bengal in the year 1760," and Beng., Sel. Com., October 24, 1760.

[36] Siyar, p. 695.

[37] Translation of a Letter from the Governor to the Nawab—dated October 19 at night, and sent by the hands of Col. Caillaud.

[38] Vansittart, I, p. 120.

his life and honour were guaranteed.[39] Mr. Vansittart accepted this offer, and Mir Qasim was accordingly proclaimed Nawab. The old Nawab was quietly escorted to Calcutta to live under the protection of the Company. Thus terminated the bloodless revolution that brought Mir Qasim from comparative obscurity to the Masnad of Murshidabad.

On a close examination of this revolution, the following points emerge:—

(*i*) Mir Qasim conceived the whole scheme, and planned the steps taken to make it a success;

(*ii*) He knew from the beginning that he would never be accepted by the Nawab as his successor even though Miran was dead. He therefore purchased the assistance of the Select Committee at Calcutta by promising assignments to relieve the Company's financial difficulties;

(*iii*) He was bent upon subverting the government of the old Nawab with, or without the

[39] Vansittart, I, pp. 120-21. Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 349). According to the latter, " On the motion of the English, Mir Qasim sent word to Nawab Meer Muhammad Jafar Khan who was inside his Mahal at the time, that he should either pay up the soldiers, or should make over his rich mutasaddis to him so that he may realise from them at the point of bayonet the revenue misappropriated by them, and pay up the salary of the soldiers and the dues of the English. This discussion went on till the afternoon, when Nawab Meer Muhammad Jafar Khan sent one of his confidential servants to say that he was ready to leave the kingdom to him . . . ." This corroborates Mr. Vansittart's version. The account given by Ghulam Husain in the Siyar is inaccurate. The latter wrongly suggests that Mr. Vansittart grew disgusted with the obstinacy of Mir Jafar, and seated Mir Qasim on the Masnad without awaiting the Nawab's final reply.

support of the English. Even if Mr. Vansittart had refused to espouse his cause, Mir Qasim would have joined the rebellious zemindars of Bihar in order to win the favour of the Shahzadah;

(*iv*) Mr. Vansittart had taken up the cause of Mir Qasim on the erroneous assumption that the latter's elevation was the only practicable solution of the Company's difficulties.[40] He lent his ears to Mr. Holwell who was an avowed[41] patron of Mir Qasim, and thus failed to grasp the problem in all its aspects. He had several alternatives before him:

(*a*) he could try to arrive at some understanding with the Nawab in the matter of the assignments;

(*b*) he could reform the Nawab's government by securing the nomination of Rajballabh as the guardian of Mir Saidu, the grandson of the Nawab;

(*c*) he could open negotiations with the Shahzadah to bring about peace;

(*d*) he could try to secure the subahdari of Bengal for the Company itself; or

(*e*) he could support the cause of Mir Qasim.

He adopted the worst alternative, and betrayed hastiness and shortsightedness in doing so. He did not even care to sound

[40] A Letter to the Proprietors of East India Stock, p. 8 (from Mr. Vansittart).

[41] Holwell's "India Tracts," p. 87.

the views of the Nawab before concluding a secret treaty with Mir Qasim, nor did he take the whole council in his confidence. His action could by no means remedy the evils it was meant to remove, or adjust the relations between the Company and the Nawab on a satisfactory basis. He took a step from which there was no going back till his protégé was placed in charge of the affairs at Murshidabad. He did not foresee the Nawab's natural disinclination to throw himself under the mercy of his treacherous son-in-law; and

(*v*) There can, however, be no doubt about the fact that Mr. Vansittart was sincerely desirous of effecting a reformation rather than a revolution and that he was the last person to be swayed by any sordid motives. It was the unexpected obduracy and subsequent nervousness shown by Mir Jafar that brought Mir Qasim on the Masnad. Mr. Vansittart had hoped that he would be able merely to substitute Mir Qasim in place of the former ministers of the Nawab. The real mistake which he committed was to have entertained an exaggerated notion of Mir Qasim's ability and importance. The history of Bengal during the next three years was the unfortunate sequel to his mistaken though well-intentioned policy.

CHAPTER IV

MIR QASIM'S ACCESSION TO THE MASNAD OF MURSHIDABAD

Mir Qasim ascended[1] the Masnad on October 20, 1760, the tenth of the Rabi-ul-Awwal in the year of the Hijrah 1174, amidst great pomp and éclat, and took great pains to impress on the wondering populace of Murshidabad that the deposition of the old Nawab was right and just. His accession was proclaimed all over the city, and people eagerly flocked to the gates of the palace to have a view of the joyous festivities that were going on inside. No efforts were spared to make the day memorable in the chequered history of Murshidabad. Friends and admirers, nobles and merchants, officials and zemindars, in fact, persons of any importance in the city crowded upon the new Nawab with their presents to offer their respects, and felicitations. Mr. Vansittart offered his congratulations[2] on behalf of the Company, and retired to Moradbagh leaving Major Yorke and a detachment of troops for the security of the Nawab.[3] This precaution was needless, as

[1] Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 143.
Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 695).
Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 735).
Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 304).
Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 349).

[2] It is interesting to note that Mr. Vansittart's Darbar charges amounted to Arcot Rs. 10,922-8-0 (*vide* Beng. Pub. Cons., Nov. 25, 1760).

[3] Letter from Mr. Vansittart to the Select Committee, dated Nov. 3, 1760. (Beng. Sel. Com., Nov. 6, 1760.)

there occurred not the slightest disturbance in the city,[4] and the day passed in merry-making, and the illuminations at night were as brilliant as on the previous day which had been the last day of the greatest festival in Bengal, the Durga Puja.

All the oriental grandeur and brilliance could hardly have concealed from the intelligentsia in Bengal the glaring treachery and cupidity of the new Nawab, and people were soon to have a bitter experience of the new régime, and its heartless oppression.[5] So far as Mir Qasim was concerned, he laboured under no delusions, and was hardly dazzled by the splendid ovations he had received. He knew very well the extremely arduous nature of the responsibilities and powers so long coveted, and now secured by him.

The Nawab's chief care after his accession was to regulate[6] the finances. He found to his utter amazement the treasury practically exhausted by the late Nawab, and there was not even one lakh in ready cash,[7] and not more than a few lakhs in gold and silver plate. Such a state of affairs would have benumbed the most optimistic of hearts, but Mir Qasim was not the man to be disheartened. He needed money to pay his forces, and those of the Company; and if he failed to secure it from the treasury, he could at any rate force those people to pay who could afford to do so. Cynical as it may appear, the Nawab had recourse to this policy systematically and ruthlessly.

[4] Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 122.

[5] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 304).

[6] "Reflections on the Present Commotions in Bengal," p. 8.

[7] Vansittart's Letter to the Select Committee, Oct. 24, 1760 (*vide* Beng. Sel. Com., Oct. 26, 1760).

There was no other way open to a man who had cheerfully undertaken to repay the arrears that had been accumulating since the commencement of the last régime, and to satisfy the demand of the Company.

The Nawab started with the convenient assumption that the old administration had been thoroughly corrupt. All responsible officers of the preceding government were ordered to submit accounts,[8] so that they might be compelled to disgorge what they had embezzled with impunity. He appointed reliable men to audit the accounts. Among others, Ali Ibrahim Khan, his most intimate friend, was to look after the military accounts. He was to be assisted by Sita Ram[9] whom Ghulam Husain describes as a man of a bad character though a complete master of all the intricacies of revenue accounts.[10] The inevitable consequence of such a policy was that innumerable embezzlements were reported by the zealous auditors and supervisors. The persons reported against were, of course, helpless against the Nawab's wrath. Everyone was taken to task, and no consideration was shown to anybody. The punishment for alleged misappropriation was cruel. Wholesale confiscations of property were made, and many nobles and wealthy people became virtual paupers. A zemindar had escaped to Calcutta with all his movable property, and Mir Qasim wrote to the governor requesting him to send him back.[11] On the pretence of securing damages for the losses due to

[8] Siyar, p. 696.
Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, pp. 351-52).

[9] Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 771).

[10] Siyar, p. 696.

[11] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 2.

embezzlement of government funds, the Nawab ruined innumerable families.[12] His greed knew no bounds. He did not hesitate to punish the relatives and dependants of Ali Vardi Khan,[13] nor did he spare even the ladies of the palace, and the women of the town.[14] They had to restore to the government their hoarded wealth, and even ornaments, because the loyal spies had found fault with them. There was hardly a rich man left in the country who wholly escaped the notice of the informers appointed by the Nawab. Their wealth was regarded a sufficient proof of their guilt. Thus, in the course of a short time, the Nawab amassed, by organised cruelty and terror, in cash and jewellery a vast treasure which he utilised in paying his own troops, and those of the Company. Mr. Vansittart, it appears, was not told how exactly money was being procured from the alleged defaulters. He was given to understand[15] that only the principal officers and 'mutasaddis' of the late administration were being compelled to give up what they had misappropriated. The governor, unaware of the terrorism going on, wrote to the Select Committee, "the Nawab applies with great diligence to the regulation of his affairs, and behaves so as to gain the affection of the people."[16]

[12] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., pp. 305-6).

[13] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 352).
Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 305, etc.).
(According to the author of Muzaffar-namah, even petty officials of Ali Vardi Khan such as Amanullah, and Mir Maqsud Ali were victims of extortion).

[14] Siyar, p. 697.

[15] Vansittart's Narrative, I, pp. 137—39.

[16] Vansittart's Letter to the Select Committee, Oct. 24, 1760 (*vide* Beng. Sel. Com., Oct. 26, 1760).

The Nawab next turned his attention to other means of raising funds without which the ordinary work of government could not be carried on. He borrowed a large sum from the Seths with the help of Mr. Vansittart.[17] Having thus secured sufficient resources to meet at least partially the demands of the troops, and other creditors, Mir Qasim embarked on a policy of an all-round retrenchment. He banished all scruples from his mind, and cut down all expenditure in so drastic a manner that he extorted the admiration of the governor.[18] He commenced with a severe retrenchment of his personal expenses, and this showed his earnestness in a way that could not be mistaken. It was a unique thing in that age indeed for a Nawab to curtail expenditure on the various ceremonials, and luxuries of the palace.[19] Mir Qasim was, however, bent upon making his government solvent, and so he shrank from no economies howsoever undignified or petty they might be. For instance, the menagerie department of the palace was abolished,[20] and the animals were actually sold to zemindars. The Nawab did not hesitate even to appropriate to himself the gold and silver decorations of the royal[21] Imambara amounting to several lakhs in value, and stopped[22] all the expenses incurred in connection with 'Tazias,' even though he was a Shiya. Not content with these savings, he had the meanness to suggest a reduction in the allowances

[17] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 2.
[18] Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 11.
[19] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 351).
[20] Siyar, p. 697.
[21] Riyaz-us-Salatin (A.S.B. Text, p. 381).
[22] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 305).

of Mir Jafar whose voluntary abdication alone had brought him on the Masnad. Mr. Vansittart had requested him to grant Rs. 25,000 monthly[23] for the expenses of the ex-Nawab, but Mir Qasim wrote in reply that a sum of Rs. 2,000 per month would be sufficient![24] Pressed by the governor, he agreed to raise the sum to Rs. 10,000,[25] but absolutely refused to make it Rs. 15,000 in spite of all representation.[26]

Mir Qasim soon found himself in a position to send remittances for the payment of the troops.[27] The arrears, however, could not be paid all at a time, but the Nawab sent instalments[28] regularly as he did not like to commit the mistake of his predecessor. When Mr. Vansittart complained[29] that the amount due to the Company was not being paid quickly, Mir Qasim decided to sell[30] a quantity of precious jewels which he had lately confiscated from various people, and handed them over to Mr. Batson, chief of the Kasimbazar factory.[31] They were sent to Calcutta, and sold[32] at auction. Thus, before long, the Nawab paid

[23] Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 7.
[24] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 3.
[25] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 11.
[26] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 9, p. 6.
[27] Siyar, p. 697, Beng. Sel. Com., Dec. 25, 1760.
Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 350, etc.).
[28] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 3.
Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 4.
Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 83, p. 1.
[29] Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 140.
Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 9.
[30] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 3. Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 351).
Siyar, p. 697.
[31] Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 11.
[32] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 168, p. 58.

up the arrears due to the Company, and paid a substantial donation of five lakhs to help the Company in their war with the French.[33] Above all, he did not forget his obligation to the members of the Select Committee, and subsequently paid them too the promised presents.[34] Besides paying the dues of the Company, the Nawab fulfilled his agreement with the Company.[35]

Thus—

(*i*) He gave the Company 'parwanahs' for the districts of Burdwan, Midnapur, and Chittagong.[36]

(*ii*) The balance of ten lakhs payable to the Company's troops was paid.[37]

(*iii*) He granted a 'parwanah' for half[38] of the Chunam production at Sylhet.

(*iv*) The 'sarrafs' and merchants were forbidden to charge any discount on the Calcutta 'sikkahs' and the Nawab allowed the latter

[33] Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 123.

[34] First Report, 1772, p. 164, Second Report of the Sel. Com., p. 20, and Third Report, 1773, p. 311.

The total sum paid as presents amounted to a little more than £2000,000.

[35] Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 101, and Beng. Sel. Com., Nov. 6, 1760.

[36] Letter from Vansittart to the Select Committee, Nov. 3, 1760 (Beng. Sel. Com., Nov. 6, 1760).

[37] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 40, and Beng. Pub. Cons., Nov. 17, 1760.

[38] Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 122.

to bear the Murshidabad stamp.[39] A notification was issued to the effect that any person who demanded 'battah' on the Calcutta 'sikkahs' was to be sent to the Nawab, and punishment would be meted out to him.[40]

Mir Qasim did not evince either caution or wisdom in the first appointments made by him. His choice fell mostly on unworthy favourites whose sole aim was to make the most of the opportunities that they now obtained for making money. The Nawab probably meant to gather round him a group of persons whose interests would be bound up with those of his régime. He favoured several of his relations with sonorous titles, and appointments, although they hardly deserved any.[41] Some of his friends were appointed as comptrollers and supervisors in the several offices, and the sole reason of their elevation was the Nawab's deep-rooted distrust of the former officials. He even went to the length of inviting old and retired Mutasaddis of Alivardi Khan's time[42] to accept office once again in the treasury so that they might be used as a check on the officers of Mir Jafar. One of the avowed objects of Mr. Vansittart in bringing about a reformation of the late Nawab's government had been to remove[43] the principal evil counsellors of Mir Jafar such as Kanna Ram, Munni Lal, and Chunnilal,

[39] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 4.
Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 9.

[40] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 3.

[41] A detailed account is given by Ghulam Husain, Siyar, p. 696.

[42] Khulasat, p. 350 (J.B.O.R.S., V).

[43] Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 19.

but Mir Qasim did not like either to dismiss or punish them before utilising their services in detecting the late embezzlements. With his usual cunning and diplomacy, he conferred on them honours and appointments. Mr. Vansittart was not aware of the underlying motives of the Nawab, and so he naturally protested against this.[44] The Nawab replied with characteristic tact that it would be imprudent to dismiss them immediately.[45] It is needless to mention that, not long afterwards, they were arrested and their property was confiscated.[46] They were subsequently executed.[47]

The following is a list of the principal officials appointed by the Nawab immediately after his accession:—

1. Ali Ibrahim Khan,[48] Chief auditor of military accounts;
2. Sita Ram,[49] Chief auditor of civil accounts.
3. Gurgin Khan,[50] 'Daroghah' of artillery.

[44] Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 10.

[45] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 4.

[46] Siyar, p. 697 and Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 352).

[47] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 304).

[48] He was the most faithful friend of Mir Qasim. Ghulam Husain has given a high opinion in regard to his ability and merit: ". . . who, to all his innate delicacy in matters of honour and fidelity, joins the incomparable talent of unravelling the most hidden mysteries of administration, and of discovering intuitively the decisive knot of the most intricate accounts . . ." (Siyar, II, p. 388), Raymond's Translation, Calcutta Reprint.

[49] ". . . A man of a bad character, and who was universally known for a mischievous wicked minister . . ." (Siyar, II, p. 389), Raymond's Translation, Calcutta Reprint.

[50] He was brother to Khwajah Petruse who had acted as an intermediary between the Nawab and the Select Committee. The author of the Siyar is extremely prejudiced against him (p. 696). His hatred may have been due to racial and religious animosity. Gurgin Khan had been a merchant at Hooghly, and subsequently

4. Shah Masnad Ali,[51] Paymaster of the forces.
5. Mahammad Zahir Husain Khan,[52] Paymaster of the forces.
6. Mahammad Naqi Khan Tabrezi,[53] Faujdar of Birbhum.
7. Syed Turab Ali Khan,[54] Naib of Murshidabad.
8. Mirza Shamsuddin,[55] Confidential Agent at Patna.
9. Mir Munshi,[56] auditor of accounts.

Once secure on the Masnad, Mir Qasim turned his attention to the task of bringing rebellious zemindars under control. This was the most pressing problem after the re-organization of finances. Since the time of Mir Jafar, some of the zemindars of Bihar and Bengal had been disaffected

became a favourite of the Nawab, and thus incurred the jealousy of others (The Khulasat, J.B.O.R.S., p. 351). Gentil who had served under him has left in his Memoirs an account of his fidelity and subsequent murder (pp. 217—235). *Vide* also an article on Gurgin Khan by M. J. Seth (Indian Historical Records Commission Proceedings, Vol. X, pp. 110—16).

[51] " . . . a man of the scum of the people, totally void of brains . . ." (Siyar, II, p. 390), Raymond's Translation, Calcutta Reprint.

[52] Khulasat, p. 351 (J.B.O.R.S., V).

[53] *Ibid.*

[54] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 117, p. 18.

[55] His sole qualification was that he was a good humorist. He was given the Commission " of conciliating to his government the minds of the principal persons of Patna." " Siyar, Raymond's Translation, Calcutta Reprint, II, p. 390," and Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 351). He subsequently became the Nawab's " Wakil " (Trans., P.L.R., 1763, No. 37, p. 32).

[56] Siyar, p. 696.

towards the Nawab, and had joined the Shahzadah.[57] Their attitude became a source of alarm and danger, as revenues were withheld by them.[58] All this had been due to the weakness of Mir Jafar's government, but Mir Qasim determined to control the dangerous power of such zemindars, and establish his own authority over the whole province. Among the zemindars, the Raja of Birbhum was the most dangerous. He was the most powerful landholder, and his estate was close to Murshidabad. The Raja had been a source of perpetual alarm to Mir Jafar,[59] because he had threatened to attack the capital more than once. On the eve of Mir Jafar's deposition, the Raja was reported to have threatened Murshidabad.[60] After the revolution, Asad Zaman Khan, the Raja, wrote to the governor protesting[61] against the deposition of the late Nawab, and made it an excuse of defying the new Nawab. Mir Qasim received information[62] about the threatened hostility of the Raja, and decided to take necessary steps against him. Mr. Vansittart also instructed the Nawab to punish the Raja.[63] The principal reason of the latter's hostile attitude was the Nawab's demand of a special contribution in addition to

[57] Beng. Sel. Com., Nov. 19, 1760.

[58] "A Letter from certain gentlemen of the Council at Bengal," p. 9.

[59] Beng. Sel. Com., July 28, 1760. The Raja complained against Mir Qasim too and declared his fidelity to the Shahzadah. (*Vide* Beng. Sel. Com., Sept. 11, 1760).

[60] Beng. Sel. Com., Nov. 10, 1760.

[61] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 1.

[62] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 3.

[63] Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 7.

the usual revenue.[64] Asad Zaman Khan was not going to obey the orders of the new Nawab who, he believed, had no right to the masnad. It was, however, no easy task to punish him. He had a small army of his own, and it was estimated that his combined force of cavalry and infantry amounted to twelve or thirteen hundred.[65] An armed expedition was therefore necessary to coerce the Raja, and the Nawab lost no time in organising one.[66] The Nawab's own military resources were extremely limited and his troops had not been fully paid. It was dangerous to march discontented troops against a rebellious zemindar.[67] He had to seek the aid of a detachment of the Company's forces. Mr. Vansittart informed the Nawab that Major Yorke was at his disposal, and could be employed against the Rajas of Birbhum and Bishanpur.[68] Early in January, 1761, the Nawab sent an expedition against the Raja of Birbhum.[69] His troops were commanded by Muhammad Khan and Gurgin Khan[70] who were instructed to destroy the forces of the Raja before the arrival of Major Yorke.[71] Their campaign proved hardly glorious in the beginning, as the Nawab's troops were new recruits generally worthless and lacking in experience. Asad Zaman Khan took the field

[64] Siyar, p. 698, and Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 352).
[65] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 19.
[66] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 3.
[67] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 19.
[68] Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 8 and p. 10.
[69] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 4.
[70] Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, p. 773, Siyar, p. 698.
[71] Siyar, p. 698.

with his army and offered a stout resistance.[72] He had recourse to guerilla tactics, and harassed the Nawab's forces from different sides.[73] It seemed that the Raja was going to gain a decisive victory over the rabble army of the Nawab. That was, however, not to be. Major Yorke was soon able to turn the scale against the Raja.[74] The final blow[75] was dealt by a small force stationed in Burdwan under Major White[76] who attacked the Raja in his rear and created a panic in his army.[77]

Mir Qasim must have been deeply mortified on discovering the worthlessness of his troops who were, by themselves, no match for the armed followers of even a zemindar! The incapacity of his own officers and men left a deep impression in his mind. He realised that his whole military organisation needed a thorough overhauling without which his position was insecure. The revolt of the Raja of Birbhum was an object-lesson to him in the early days of his power. The helplessness of the Nawab was clearly demonstrated. However, the troubles in Birbhum and other places soon ceased. Asad Zaman Khan repented of his conduct, and submitted to the Nawab.[78] His

[72] Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 773).

[73] Siyar, p. 699, Muzaffar-namah fully corroborates the account of the Siyar.

[74] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 4.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[76] He had been ordered by the Council to join Major Yorke (*vide* Letter from the Council to the Court, Jan. 16, 1761).

[77] Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 11.
Beng. Sel. Com., Jan. 5, 1761.

[78] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 91, pp. 5-6.

submission was accepted on payment[79] of a huge indemnity from which the Nawab had to pay the Company's Sepoys handsomely for their victory against the Raja of Birbhum.[80]

Mir Qasim soon managed to bring some order out of chaos in the affairs of the government, and securely established himself on the masnad of Murshidabad. It is apparent that he closely followed the instructions given[81] by Mr. Vansittart at the time of the latter's departure from Murshidabad, and the opening of his administration seemed to justify the hopes of his supporters.

[79] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 352).

[80] Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 11.

[81] Beng. Sel. Com., Nov. 6, 1760.

Mr. Vansittart while departing from Murshidabad had delivered an address to the Nawab, which contained the following instructions:—

(*i*) The affairs of the Government should be very carefully and prudently handled.

(*ii*) The Nawab should not entrust large powers to the subordinates, and must attend to the business of the state in person.

(*iii*) One of the reasons of Mir Jafar's overthrow was his jealousy towards the English, so the Nawab must not be jealous of his friends, the English.

(*iv*) If the 'Nawab' had any grievance against the English, he should not give vent to his indignation publicly, but ought to refer it to the Governor.

(*v*) Economy should be practised in every branch of the Government.

(*vi*) The Nawab must endeavour to punish the wrong-doers, and dispense right and free justice.

CHAPTER V

MIR QASIM AT PATNA, 1761

The political situation in Bihar had been a source of perpetual anxiety to Mir Jafar owing to the repeated incursions of the Shahzadah, and the rebellion of powerful zemindars. Mir Qasim came to power at a time when the Shahzadah[1] was still in Bihar aided by Mons. Law and the rebellious zemindars.[2] The Nawab's troops were mutinous[3] for want of pay, and in no mood to fight against the enemy. Many of them were even deserting to the Shahzadah.[4] The Nawab had paid them only a part of their dues,[5] but still they did not fully co-operate with the Company's troops. The principal officials of the Nawab in Bihar—Ramnarayan and Rajballabh—were jealous of each other, and their mutual wrangles[6] not only caused a dislocation of the administrative affairs, but also prevented the Company's officers from inflicting a decisive defeat on the Shahzadah. The Nawab's troops whose pay was heavily in arrears were kept under control with great difficulty. Rajballabh was

[1] Mir Qasim had sent a petition to the Shahzadah even before his accession with a view to gain his good-will. Beng. Sel. Com., Sept. 24, 1760.

[2] Beng. Sel. Com., December 4, 1760, and Shah Alam Namah, p. 129.

[3] *Ibid*, November 6, 1760, and Shah Alam Namah, p. 168.

[4] *Ibid*., November 19, 1760.

[5] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, pp. 3-4.

[6] Siyar, p. 700 (Lucknow Text).

openly abused by them for non-payment of salary, and his life itself was in danger.[7] This state of affairs certainly encouraged Shahzadah and his adherents in their designs. The Nawab's presence was urgently needed at Patna to stop the continual dissensions among his officers, to assist the Company's troops in driving out the Shahzadah, to chastise the hostile zemindars, and to regulate the affairs of the province.[8] Mir Qasim was, however, not in a position to go to Patna in spite of the strong representation of Ghulam Husain who had been sent by Major Carnac to persuade him to come to Patna immediately,[9] because early in January, 1761, he was busy with the military operations against the Raja of Birbhum. He could not leave for Patna without establishing himself securely in Bengal. All that he could do was to send considerable sums for payment to the troops in Bihar.[10]

The Nawab, however, decided[11] to leave for Bihar immediately after punishing the Birbhum Raja, because he was getting suspicious of the intentions of the Shahzadah. He apprehended[12] that the English officers in Bihar might intrigue against him with the latter. He would never feel secure so long as the Mughal prince remained in the country.[13]

[7] Beng. Sel. Com., December 14, 1760.

[8] *Ibid.*, January 5, 1761.

[9] Siyar, p. 700 (Lucknow Text).

[10] Beng. Sel. Com., November 6, 1760, Beng. Sel. Com., January 19, 1761. Vansittart's Narrative, I, pp. 178-9.

[11] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 4.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

[13] Zemindars like Pahalwan Singh intrigued with the Shahzadah. (See Shah Alam Namah, p. 169).

Luckily for the Nawab, the Shahzadah was decisively defeated[14] on January 15, 1761, by Carnac who having taken command at Patna on December 31, 1760, had taken the field with the Company's troops unassisted by the Nawab's army.[15] The Shahzadah now wanted to come to an understanding[16] with the English and return to Delhi, as the Abdali was reported to have recognised him as the Emperor of Delhi. He realised that the English could be his invaluable allies in the near future,[17] so he decided to settle the terms of peace with them, and met Carnac on February 6, who honourably escorted him to Patna.[18] They reached there on the 14th of February.[19] This dramatic turn of events made it imperative for the Nawab to hurry to Patna immediately.[20] The news of the Shahzadah's arrival at Patna caused him great anxiety.[21] He was extremely apprehensive of a close alliance between the Shahzadah and the Company, and he determined to prevent it. What alarmed him most was the Governor's communication to him that the Shahzadah intended to proceed to Delhi with the assistance of the English.[22] After the pacification of Birbhum in February, the Nawab left for

[14] Beng. Sel. Com., January 22, 1761.

[15] *Ibid.*, January 19, 1761.

[16] *Ibid.*, February 10, 1761.

[17] *Ibid.*, February 17 and 28, 1761.

[18] *Ibid.*, February 28, 1761.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] Muzaffar-namah, p. 310 (Alld. Univ. MS.).

[21] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 355). Siyar, p. 703 (Lucknow Text).

[22] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 126, pp. 22, 23, and Beng. Sel. Com., February 17, 1761.

Patna attended by a detachment under Major York,[23] and reached Baikuntpur in the beginning of March.[24] There he was met by Carnac, Ramnarayan and Rajballabh who paid their respects to him.[25]

The Nawab evinced a queer suspicion of the Shahzadah, and immediately recalled the forces of Ramnarayan and Rajballabh who had been sent by Carnac to subdue Kamgar Khan, a rebel zemindar. This brought about an unpleasant misunderstanding with Carnac during the interview[26] at Baikuntpur. This incident demonstrates how the Nawab lacked all military sense. Although he had been informed by Mr. Vansittart that Carnac would follow his instructions and obey him implicitly,[27] he ought to have realised the necessity of consulting the latter before sending for Ramnarayan and Rajballabh with their forces. Carnac was justified in feeling that the Nawab had no right to upset his plans without previously informing him[28] about it, as the whole responsibility of the military operations rested with him. During his very first interview with the Nawab, Carnac made it perfectly clear to the latter that it was he who was ultimately responsible for the direction of the English forces, and that he must not be expected to render implicit obedience in the matter of military operations. This plain speaking on the part of Carnac offended[29]

[23] Vansittart, I, p. 179, and Beng. Sel. Com., January 26, 1761.
[24] Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 13.
[25] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 174, pp. 53-54.
[26] Beng. Sel. Com., March 15, 1761.
[27] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 197, p. 68.
[28] Vansittart, I, p. 185, Carnac to Sel. Com., March 6, 1761.
[29] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 5, and Vansittart, I, p. 188.

the Nawab who thought he had every right to dictate to him in all matters. Mir Qasim had obviously recalled the forces, as he did not consider himself sufficiently secure without their presence at Patna. Regardless of its undesirable consequences to the military operations against Kamgar Khan, and overwhelmed with needless fear, he provoked Carnac by throwing the whole responsibility of subduing Kamgar Khan's country on the Company's detachment under Captain Champion. Carnac, therefore, rightly recalled Captain Champion on the ground that he could not remain unassisted by the Nawab's troops in a country with which he was wholly unfamiliar.[30] The Nawab was unreasonably enraged at this, and questioned the action of Carnac. The only direct result of this misunderstanding was that the Nawab's suspicions of the English officers were deepened, and he became hypersensitive in all his dealings with them during his stay at Patna.

At Patna, the Nawab encamped with his men on the eastern side of the city near Jafar Khan's garden.[31] He did not think it prudent to go to the fort, nor did he like to dismiss Major York and his men.[32] The real reason was that he did not trust either Carnac or Ramnarayan. With the latter he was displeased from the beginning for his dilatoriness in following his instructions.[33] He exhibited a

[30] Beng. Sel. Com., March 15, 1761.

[31] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 703).

[32] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 177, p. 56.

[33] This fact is alluded to only in the Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., pp. 312-13).

curious aversion to the Shahzadah who, he knew, had offered to grant the Company the Diwani and Subahdari of Bengal.[34] He could not be easily persuaded to offer his respects to him. Carnac tried in vain[35] to introduce him to the honoured guest. The Nawab positively refused to go to the Shahzadah's quarters.[36] Suspicious by nature as he was, he may have anticipated some foul play. He did not think himself safe there, such was his strange nervousness; nor would he visit the Shahzadah except on a lucky day.[37] After some futile negotiation, an auspicious day was fixed, and Carnac requested the Nawab to consent to an interview on that day.[38] It was, however, agreed that the meeting should take place in the English Factory where alone the Nawab could be persuaded to go.[39] He even insisted that the Shahzadah should come with a small retinue. Carnac had to induce the latter to bring a few followers only.[40]

The English Factory presented a gay appearance on the appointed day, and the central hall was decorated to serve the purpose of a Diwan-i-Khas. Shah Alam (as the Shahzadah had proclaimed himself) came into the hall,[41]

[34] Beng. Sel. Com., December 11, 1760.

[35] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 313).

[36] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 355).

[37] Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 14.

[38] 4th Shaban, *vide* Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 314), and Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 736, March 12), *vide* Carnac's letter to the Select Committee, March 20.

[39] Beng. Sel. Com., March 28, 1761.

[40] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 703).

[41] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 356). Ghulam Husain also gives a long description of the improvised hall of audience and the whole interview. (Siyar, p. 703).

and cordially welcomed[42] the Nawab who made the usual three bows, and presented a 'nazar' of one thousand and one gold coins, a quantity of jewels, and other costly articles.[43] These Shah Alam graciously accepted,[44] and in return honoured the Nawab with presents, invested him with a 'Sarpech', and even consented to dine at the same table with him.[45] Thus ended the first interview after the payment of the customary 'peshkash'. The Nawab was, however, at heart extremely annoyed at the presence of Shah Alam whom he held responsible for the confusion of his affairs at Patna.[46] He even complained to Mr. Vansittart that he could not afford to pay the allowances fixed for his guest, and grumbled at his lack of resources. He had consented to pay the daily allowance of the Shah-zadah very reluctantly. He at first gave him Rs. 1,000 a day, but as this did not prove sufficient, another three hundred rupees had to be added.[47] The Shahzadah still complained that this amount was too small to support his rank and file.[48] The Governor then requested the Nawab to pay Rs. 500 more.[49] Mir Qasim was, however, feeling impatient[50] at the prolonged stay of his guest who was being

[42] Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 5.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[44] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 314).

[45] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 182, pp. 58-9.

[46] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 6.

[47] Beng. Sel. Com., March 17, 1761.

[48] *Ibid.*, March 31, 1761. (Letter from McGuire, dated March 23, 1761).

[49] Abs. P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 15, and Beng. Sel. Com., March 17, 1761.

[50] Beng. Sel. Com., March 28, 1761.

entertained at his expense. The Select Committee rightly agreed with Mr. McGuire that the allowance was an insignificant sum compared to the vast amount spent during the previous years to keep him off the province.[51]

All the time, the Nawab complained against Carnac. It is necessary, therefore, to suggest the reasons why he was so prejudiced against the latter:—

(*i*) Carnac did not adopt a humble attitude towards the Nawab, and so the latter's vanity was hurt;[52]

(*ii*) Mir Qasim suspected that Carnac might intrigue against him, as he had not approved of his elevation to the masnad;

(*iii*) The Nawab wrongly believed that Carnac wanted to belittle him in the eyes of Shah Alam;[53]

(*iv*) Carnac was further known to be supporting Ramnarayan whom the Nawab wanted to punish and remove from his office of Diwan of Patna;[54]

(*v*) The Nawab was highly annoyed at the suggestion of Carnac that the Council should arbitrate upon his complaints against Ramnarayan;[55]

[51] Beng. Sel. Com., April 9, 1761.

[52] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 6.

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[55] Beng. Sel. Com., April 21, 1761.

(*vi*) The Nawab also believed that Carnac was not helping him sincerely in settling the distracted province, and crushing the power of the rebellious zemindars;

(*vii*) Mir Qasim apprehended[56] that Carnac was intentionally detaining the Emperor to secure the 'subahdari' for the Company;

(*viii*) It was because Carnac had brought the Emperor to Patna, that the Nawab was obliged to pay the 'peshkash', and promise a yearly tribute which had been withheld by his predecessors. The Nawab deemed it an unnecessary burden on his limited resources, and blamed the English for having unduly magnified the importance of a fugitive Mughal adventurer. He vainly[57] requested Carnac to persuade the Emperor to leave immediately, and even asked the Council at Calcutta not to recognise the Shahzadah.

Once the fiction of Shah Alam's supremacy over Bengal was acknowledged, negotiations had to be commenced on behalf of the unwilling Nawab in regard to the annual tribute payable to the Emperor. Shitab Rai was the intermediary in these negotiations,[58] and after a good

[56] The Shahzadah actually offered the subahdari to the Company —and refused to grant it to Mir Qasim. (Beng. Sel. Com., April 9, 1761).

[57] Beng. Sel. Com., March 28, 1761.

[58] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 356).

deal of bargaining, it was settled that the Nawab was to pay 24 lakhs of rupees annually.[59] While these negotiations were going on, Mir Qasim learnt that Shuja-ud-daulah under the pretence of paying his respects to the Emperor was coming towards Bihar in order to create disturbances and help the disaffected.[60] The Nawab grew very nervous at this, and determined to prevent a junction between the Wazir of Oudh and the Emperor. He wrote to the Governor saying that Shuja-ud-daulah should not be allowed to enter Bihar on any account. Mr. Vansittart placated the Nawab by asking the Wazir to remain on the confines of his own dominions.[61]

Matters were thus in a confused state at Patna. The Emperor was ill at ease, impatient to be escorted to Delhi. The Nawab was eager to see him leave his country. Hard pressed for money, he bitterly complained to Mr. Vansittart against Carnac, and Ramnarayan was alleged to have refused so far to submit the accounts of his administration of Bihar. It was at this juncture that Carnac was superseded [62] by Coote who was sent to Patna with civil powers also.[63] Mr. Vansittart again committed the mistake of acquainting the Nawab that Coote was to obey all his injunctions,[64] and thus prepared the way for a repetition of

[59] Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 737). Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 356); Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 703).

[60] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 8, and Beng. Sel. Com., March 28, 1761, March 31, 1761, and April 3, 1761.

[61] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 286, A., p. 135.

[62] Vansittart, I, p. 191.

[63] Beng. Sel. Com., May 20, 1761.

[64] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 233, p. 95.

the misunderstanding that had already taken place between the Nawab and Carnac. Mir Qasim should have been plainly told that Coote was not to be treated as his paid servant, but was to be regarded as a trusted friend. However, the Nawab fondly hoped[65] that Coote would be more obedient to him than Carnac had been. Mr. Vansittart repeatedly assured him that Coote would act according to his orders, and would help him in all matters.[66]

The Nawab, shrewd and selfish as he was, wanted to win over Coote and regulate the affairs of Bihar according to his fancy through the latter's help and active co-operation. He spared no pains to secure the alliance of the Colonel, but his disappointment was acute when he realised that the latter was not going to be a puppet in his hands! The Nawab wrote to Mr. Vansittart, 'I have observed all the customs and forms in entertainments of eating and reciprocal visits more attentively and more heartily with him than I ever did with any other person'.[67] The Nawab's words are too significant to be lost sight of. There is no doubt about the fact that he aimed at cultivating the friendship of Coote with the ulterior object of using him as a tool in his designs specially against Ramnarayan. He was, however, tactless from the very beginning, and alienated the sympathy of Coote. Firstly, he showed an exaggerated aversion to Nand Kumar whom Coote had appointed as his Diwan.[68] Secondly, he unreasonably

[65] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 6.

[66] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, Nos. 245 and 246, pp. 102—5.

[67] Vansittart, I, p. 209.

[68] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 7.

insisted that Coote should visit him before meeting Shah Alam,[69] which the Colonel rightly refused to do.[70] Thirdly, he did not conceal his repugnance to the want of sufficient humility in Coote's conduct during the first interview,[71] and imagined that it was due to the intrigue of the disaffected.[72] Lastly, he needlessly irritated Coote who was known to have disapproved of the late revolution by bluntly inquiring of him whether another Nawab would be appointed in his place.[73] Such a greeting, as Professor Dodwell truly remarks, was ill-calculated to convert Coote.[74] Besides, during the first interview[75] the Nawab insisted that Ramnarayan, whom Coote had been instructed to protect, should be turned out immediately, and that the Emperor too should be asked to leave. Coote not only did not agree to these proposals, but criticised the Nawab's policy in spending 16 lakhs of rupees on his rabble army, and advised him to disband a large part of it. All this served to cause the Nawab's annoyance.

Mir Qasim tried his best to humour Coote, but soon grew disgusted with him when he realised that the latter was not going to be dictated to in any way. Serious misunderstanding soon arose in connexion with the Shahzadah. The Nawab was eager to secure the 'sanad' for 'subahdari'

[69] Beng. Sel. Com., June 15, 1761.

[70] *Ibid.*, and Coote's Diary (Orme MSS.) quoted by Prof. Dodwell in his 'Dupleix and Clive,' p. 209 (footnote).

[71] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 8.

[72] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 8.

[73] Coote's Diary, May 21, 1761.

[74] Prof. Dodwell's 'Dupleix and Clive,' p. 209 (footnote).

[75] Beng. Sel. Com., June 5, 1761.

from the latter, and complained that Coote was deliberately preventing him from getting it.[76] He complained so bitterly of it to Mr. Vansittart that the latter really believed that Coote had intentionally opposed the Nawab's application for the 'sanad.'[77] The Nawab further suspected that Coote did not like that he should be confirmed in his 'subahdari' by the Emperor. As a matter of fact Coote did not maliciously oppose the Nawab's application for a 'sanad'. The Nawab himself refused to pay adequately for it to the Emperor, hence the latter did not agree to grant it. The Emperor also did not like him for his being a 'sayyid.'[78] However, he would certainly have granted the 'sanad,' if the Nawab had been prepared to pay a handsome 'peshkash'! Mr. Vansittart himself asked him in vain to pay a decent amount.[79] Under the circumstances, therefore, the Nawab's complaint against Coote was entirely groundless. The Nawab further believed without any justification that Shah Alam's departure was being forcibly delayed by Coote and Carnac.[80] He desired to get rid of his unwelcome guest by any means fair or foul![81] A part of his mutinous troops had recently attacked the Shahzadah's camp, and had been repelled by the Company's

[76] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 9.

[77] Vans., I, p. 196.

[78] Beng. Sel. Com., Dec. 11, 1760.

[79] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 209, pp. 76-7.

[80] Beng. Sel. Com., May 8, 1761.

[81] Mr. Holwell thus defended the attitude of the Nawab: 'That the Nawab should be anxious to get the King out of the provinces as soon as possible we can account for and justly vindicate, from causes very obvious.' *Vide* his 'Refutation of a letter from certain Gentlemen of the Council at Bengal.'

troops against the Emperor.[82] In spite of Coote's request, he refused to proclaim the Shahzadah as Emperor.[83]

The author of the Muzaffar-namah gives a graphic account of the Nawab's mean trick to bring about the quick departure of the Shahzadah.[84] The Court eunuch, Bahadur Ali Khan, was induced to represent to his master that it was neither safe, nor dignified to stay at Patna any longer. The apparent loyalty and anxiety of his servant touched the heart of the prince, and he resolved to leave early in June. The author of the Riyaz-us-Salatin also says,[85] 'The officers of the Emperor marked some change in the conduct of Qasim Ali Khan.' They thus perfectly corroborate the statement of Carnac that the Nawab bribed some of the Shahzadah's officers so that they might induce their master to go.[86]

The Nawab's object was soon realised. The Emperor left Patna on the 5th of June.[87] Before his departure, usual ceremonies and formalities had to be gone through, and the leave-taking proved a costly affair to Mir Qasim. He had to offer the customary presents including a number of elephants and other valuable articles,[88] and a cash 'nazar' of a little more than two lakhs.[89] The Emperor

[82] Beng. Sel. Com., May 8, 1761 (*vide* Letter from Carnac, dated April 28).

[83] Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 17, Beng. Sel. Com., May 6, 1761.

[84] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., pp. 315-6).

[85] Riyaz-us-Salatin (A.S.B. Text, p. 381).

[86] Beng. Sel. Com., April 21, 1761; and General Letter to the Court, Nov. 12, 1761.

[87] *Ibid.*, June 13, 1761.

[88] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 317).

[89] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 6, and Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 229, pp. 92-93.

in return conferred upon him a 'mansab' of 7,000 horse, and the high-sounding title[90] of 'Nawab Ali Jah Nasim-ul-Mulk Imtiaz-ud-daulah Qasim Ali Khan Nusrat Jang.' The Nawab, in accordance with oriental etiquette, requested the Emperor to postpone his departure, regretted the small amount that he had been able to pay him, and hoped that he would be able to pay one lakh per day after the rainy season.[91] The guest was too clever to be coaxed by the hollow formality of his host, and he left with a detachment of Company's troops under Carnac. The Nawab was unquestionably relieved!

Mir Qasim was now free to apply himself assiduously to the task of bringing Ramnarayan under his control. For some time past, he had tried to supplant the Naib at Patna, and now he was determined not only to drive him out of his office, but also to punish him adequately for his alleged disaffection. He had, however, failed so far to take him to task owing to the support that Ramnarayan received from Carnac and Coote. It would be better to summarise the Nawab's principal grievances against the 'Naib':—

(*i*) A large amount was alleged to be due from the Naib;[92]

(*ii*) The latter was reported to have refused to submit the papers and accounts regarding the 'subah' of Bihar;[93]

[90] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., p. 386), and Riyaz-us-Salatin (A.S.B. Text, p. 381).

[91] Coote's Letter, *vide* Beng. Sel. Com., June 13, 1761.

[92] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 7; Beng. Sel. Com., April 21, 1761.

[93] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 234, p. 96.

(*iii*) The Nawab also complained of the improper behaviour of the Naib,[94] and was annoyed at the latter's delay in welcoming him.[95]

(*iv*) The Nawab further suspected him to have been responsible for the confusion of affairs in his 'subah', and charged him with the grossest disaffection.[96]

(*v*) Ramnarayan was further held responsible for the difficulties in collecting the total dues from the zemindars;[97]

(*vi*) The Nawab even complained of numerous disturbances in the province by Ramnarayan's men;[98]

(*vii*) Ramnarayan was supposed to have inflamed the mind of Coote against the Nawab;[99]

(*viii*) The Nawab was also mistrustful of him owing to his alleged intimacy with the Shahzadah;[100]

(*ix*) The Naib was reputed to be extremely rich, and the Nawab believed that the latter must have been regularly misappropriating Government revenues;[101]

94 Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 6.
95 Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 312).
96 Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 7.
97 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
98 *Ibid.*, p. 10.
99 Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 319).
100 *Ibid.*, p. 313.
101 First Report, p. 164 (Carnac's evidence), Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 9.

(x) Ramnarayan was alleged to have spread the report that the Nawab was preparing to attack the English force at Patna;[102] and

(xi) He was reported to have proclaimed the Shahzadah as Emperor without the Nawab's sanction or knowledge.[103]

It is clear from contemporary evidence that the above complaints are either entirely baseless, or grossly exaggerated. He certainly delayed in submitting his accounts, and failed to submit the whole of it. Besides, it is certain that he did prejudice Coote against the Nawab only to escape the latter's wrath, and earn the good will of the former. The other charges could never be proved, and were only vague insinuations. It is an undisputed fact that the Nawab had from the very beginning of his rule showed a profound distrust[104] of Ramnarayan on account of his known connexion with the English, and only looked for an opportunity to humiliate and punish him. The Nawab's object was to get rid of all those people who had any connexion with the Company. He knew that Ramnarayan had been maintained by Clive as a check on his predecessor, and would remain so on him, if he was not to be immediately removed.[105] He resented[106] the protection

[102] Vansittart, I, p. 216.

[103] *Ibid.*, p. 222.

[104] Muzaffar-namah (MS.), p. 317; Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 363); Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (MS.), p. 774; Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 705).

[105] Scrafton's Observations on Mr. Vansittart's Narrative, p. 32.

[106] Beng. Sel. Com., June 18, 1761. *Vide* minute of dissent by Amyatt who rightly argued that the Nawab had been fully aware of

that the English officers had been consistently giving to the Naib, and bitterly complained about it to Mr. Vansittart in order to prejudice him[107] against the former, and even succeeded in convincing him of the disaffection and treachery of Ramnarayan.[108] The Nawab counted upon Mr. McGuire as his friend whom he won over by bestowing upon him constant favours and presents.[109] Mr. McGuire was induced by the shrewd Nawab to report to the Governor against Ramnarayan and Coote.[110] It must be understood, however, that the Select Committee had successively instructed Carnac and Coote to support the cause of Ramnarayan, and protect his life and honour.[111] To Ramnarayan, himself the Governor wrote several times promising him his support.[112] Carnac was informed by the Select Committee, 'we direct you, in case of necessity, to protect Ramnarayan against all violence and injustice that may be offered to his person, honour, or fortune.'[113] It is because Carnac defended the Naib from any maltreat-

the firm friendship existing between Ramnarayan and the English, and it was for this alone that the Nawab wanted to ruin him. Mr. Amyatt further stated that the Naib had never been disloyal, nor had he misappropriated the revenues. Mr. Amyatt's minute, and that of Mr. Ellis cannot be lightly rejected on the ground of their bias against the Nawab.

[107] Vansittart, I, pp. 217-8.

[108] *Ibid.*, p. 196.

[109] Siyar, 706.

[110] Letter from Mr. McGuire to Mr. Vansittart, June 17, 1761 (Beng. Pub. Cons., June 26, 1761).

[111] Vansittart, I, p. 180 and p. 193.

[112] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, Nos. 155 and 257; Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 61.

[113] Beng. Sel. Com., February 9, 1761.

ment that he incurred the wrath of the Nawab.[114] The latter on his part persisted in complaining against Ramnarayan's chicanery and deceitfulness.[115] Coote was, therefore, specially instructed to adjust the misunderstanding amicably, and to protect the Naib from oppression, and also to support him in the government of Patna.[116]

Mr. Vansittart at first wanted to be lenient to Ramnarayan, and requested the Nawab to settle his accounts amicably.[117] But, the Nawab went on complaining with redoubled bitterness, and scarcely a letter passed between him and the Governor, which did not contain some imputation against the Naib. Mr. Vansittart was at last convinced of the latter's guilt.[118] With his characteristic generosity he permitted the Nawab to do as he pleased with Ramnarayan,[119] and rebuked the latter for the impropriety of his conduct.[120] This marked the Governor's tacit acquiescence in the Nawab's policy against the Naib and the virtual withdrawal of protection so long promised to him. The Nawab, in order to be sure of the alliance of Mr. Amyatt whom he knew to be a supporter of the Naib, sent Ghulam Husain to Calcutta on a confidential mission to Mr. Amyatt. Ghulam Husain writes[121] . . . ' (the Nawab) . . . proposed

[114] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 7.

[115] Beng. Sel. Com., April 28, 1761.

[116] *Ibid.*, April 21, 1761.

[117] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 224, pp. 95-96.

[118] Vansittart, I, p. 196.

[119] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, Nos. 263 and 291.

[120] *Ibid.*, No. 264, p. 118.

[121] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 705), and Translation (Calcutta Reprint, II, p. 412).

to me a voyage to Calcutta. "You are," said he "in connection with Mr. Amyatt, the great supporter of Ramnarayan. I wish, therefore, you would go to Calcutta, and manage so as that he might let go his hold of that man, and join me, as I want the Council's consent for my bringing that Governor under control."

At Patna, however, Coote consistently supported Ramnarayan who represented to him with reason that he could not clear off the accounts unless the zemindars paid their arrears of revenue.[122] Mr. Vansittart strongly objected to Coote's excessive attachment to the Naib.[123]

Ramnarayan had been virtually suspended from his office in April,[124] and was ordered in May to submit all his papers. It must be admitted that his accounts had not been properly kept, and he was now in a great difficulty. He knew that the Nawab was bent on punishing him, so he could not expect any leniency from the Nawab. He sought to avail himself of the protection of Coote, and quickly managed to make friends with him. It is from him that Coote received innumerable reports about the hostile intentions harboured by Mir Qasim against the English.[125] Most of these no doubt originated in 'bazaar' gossip, and were highly exaggerated stories—but the clever 'Naib' knew that it was only by thoroughly poisoning Coote's mind against the Nawab that he might escape the latter's tyranny. Coote was already annoyed with the Nawab for his reluc-

[122] Beng. Sel. Com., June 5, 1761.

[123] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 309, pp. 153-54.

[124] *Ibid.*, No. 245, pp. 102-3.

[125] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 706).

tance[126] to proclaim the Shahzadah as Emperor even though the latter had left Patna. The Nawab too was indignant with Coote for his strong attitude, and suspected that the latter was negotiating to obtain the Diwani for the Company from the Emperor.[127] Under the circumstances, it is quite natural that there should have arisen a serious misunderstanding between the Nawab and Coote.[128] The latter, therefore, readily believed all that Ramnarayan, or others used to tell him about the Nawab and his designs.

Mir Qasim was asked by Coote to enter the fort on June 15, and cause the 'sikkahs' to be struck and the 'khutbah' to be read in Shah Alam's name, but this the Nawab refused to do (although he had agreed [129] previously), unless the English sepoys and guards were removed from the city gates.[130] It was without doubt a frivolous objection, and naturally irritated Coote. He rightly pointed out to the Nawab that these sepoys had been instructed to obey his orders, were a part of his own army, and that they were absolutely necessary to protect the Nawab from his own mutinous troops who were intent on plundering the city, according to his own report.[131] Coote had also agreed to place some of the Nawab's people together with his own at the gates. It was, therefore, certainly strange that the Nawab wanted to drive the Company's sentries and

[126] Vansittart, I (Coote's Letter, p. 243).

[127] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, Nos. 355 and 386.

[128] Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 19.

[129] Vansittart, I, p. 211.

[130] Coote's Letter to Mr. Vansittart, Narrative, I, p. 239, and Beng. Pub. Cons., June 26, 1761.

[131] *Ibid.*, p. 240.

guards from the city. Coote cannot be blamed, if he regarded it as an indication of the Nawab's inexplicable suspicion and jealousy of the English troops. At any rate, it was clear that Mir Qasim wanted to postpone the function of the proclamation on some excuse. The Nawab gave no reply till the 15th, when he suddenly sent a letter to Coote at night curtly refusing to stir out of his camp, and perform the ceremony in person unless the sepoys were removed from the gates. The time and the manner of sending the letter mystified Coote, and aroused his suspicion. He, therefore, decided to see the Nawab next morning and settle the matter satisfactorily. It is noteworthy that the Nawab did not grant an interview. This naturally intensified the suspicions of Coote who ordered messengers to watch what passed in the Nawab's camp, and to report to him everything about it.[132]

Ramnarayan heard all about it, and deemed this a fit opportunity to be exploited to his advantage. There is sufficient evidence to prove Ramnarayan's scheme to bring about an open rupture between Coote and the Nawab. He offered a bribe of Rs. 2,000 to one of Coote's messengers, and induced him to inform the Colonel that the Nawab was busy preparing a surprise attack on the city.[133] He also met Coote in person and informed him that Mir Qasim cherished hostile intentions against the English;[134] and in order to further convince Coote of it, he ordered his own troops to be in readiness.[135] Coote was informed that

[132] Vansittart, I, p. 242.
[133] Muzaffar-namah (MS.), p. 318.
[134] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 604).
[135] Siyar, p. 706.

the Nawab had doubled his guards,[136] and that unusual military preparations were apace.[137] All these reports naturally made Coote anxious for his own safety, as the greater part of the forces had been taken away by Carnac. He resolved to have an interview with the Nawab next morning, and at about six started with 30 European Cavalry and a company of sepoys who were his usual attendants.[138] He had sent Mr. Watts earlier to inform the Nawab that he was coming to wait upon him.[139]

Coote reached the Nawab's tents by seven, and alighted near the Darbar tent. He did not intrude into private tents, as alleged by the Nawab.[140] Mr. Watts told him that the Nawab was still asleep in his zenana.[141] As a matter of fact, the Nawab was not sleeping, he simply remained inside and purposely refused to see Coote.[142] The latter with pistols in his hands for personal security went to the Darbar tent, and waited for some time. The Nawab, however, did not come out.[143] Coote then went away leaving an officer to inform the Nawab about his visit, and apologise on his behalf for having come at an early hour.[144] This incident the Nawab characteristically described as a pre-

[136] Coote's Letter to Mr. Vansittart, Narrative, I, p. 242.

[137] Coote's Diary, June 15-16, 1761. Reference in Professsor Dodwell's 'Dupleix and Clive,' p. 269.

[138] First Report, Coote's evidence, p. 166.

[139] Vansittart, I, p. 245.

[140] *Ibid.*

[141] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 604) ; Siyar, p. 706.

[142] Muzaffar-namah (MS.), p. 318.

[143] Coote's Diary, June 17, 1761. Reference in Prof. Dodwell's 'Dupleix and Clive,' p. 209.

[144] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 605) ; Siyar, p. 706.

meditated insult. He charged Coote with violent trespass into his private tents, and sent a highly exaggerated account of the affair to Mr. Vansittart.[145] Coote did not go near the zenana, nor did he behave indecently. He did not carry cocked pistols, and did not leave troops at the zenana as alleged by the Nawab.[146] The affair might have been overlooked as due to clear misunderstanding, but the Nawab used it[147] as a convenient pretext for humiliating Coote, and securing the latter's recall. Mir Qasim was determined that Coote must leave Patna, and he magnified the incident in such a way[148] that Mr. Vansittart was perfectly convinced of Coote's guilt.[149] He formally protested against his improper behaviour without giving any consideration to the special circumstances which had obliged Coote to visit the Nawab's camp in an unusual manner, and even wrote apologetically to the Nawab expressing his abhorrence of Coote's action.[150] The Nawab further complained of Coote's interference with his administrative affairs.[151]

The Select Committee decided that both Coote and Carnac should leave Bihar. They were recalled accordingly.[152] Coote left Patna early in July, but mean-

[145] Siyar, p. 706.

[146] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 9.

[147] Siyar, p. 706; Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 604).

[148] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 9.

[149] Vansittart, pp. 234-35.

[150] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 322.

[151] Vansittart, I, 213. Coote defends his conduct with cogent reasons. *Vide* his letter, Vansittart, pp. 246—249.

[152] Beng. Sel. Com., June 26, 1761.

while he had compelled[153] the unwilling Nawab to proclaim Shah Alam as Emperor. Mir Qasim was now free to revenge himself on Ramnarayan who was left without any supporter after the departure of Carnac and Coote. The Nawab had recently offered[154] a bribe of seven lakhs and a half of rupees to Coote, if he would surrender Ramnarayan to him, but Coote had refused to betray the latter, now the Nawab was relieved that the Naib had lost all his friends and partisans.

In vain did Ramnarayan ask for permission to leave the country[155] and he wrote to Shuja-ud-daulah also soliciting his help.[156] There was no escape, however, from the Nawab's clutches! He had already been formally dismissed from his office in June by the Nawab with the concurrence[157] of the Select Committee. Mr. Vansittart, however, interceded on behalf of the ex-Naib,[158] and even requested the Nawab to re-instate him, if his accounts were found satisfactory,[159] but he made it clear that in case Ramnarayan failed to pay the dues, he might be dealt with in any manner the Nawab should choose.[160] This was giving a free hand to the Nawab, and marked a complete reversal of the policy pursued by Clive.

[153] *Ibid.*, June 29, 1761.
[154] First Report, Coote's evidence, p. 166.
[155] Beng. Sel. Com., July 12, 1761.
[156] Beng. Pub. Cons., Aug. 5, 1761. (He wrote to the Wazir "I hope that you will speedily despatch a strong army into these parts and I am ready to devote my life to your cause.").
[157] Beng. Sel. Com., June 18, 1761.
[158] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 309, p. 153.
[159] *Ibid.*, No. 322, p. 159.
[160] *Ibid.*, No. 350, p. 175.

Rajballabh who had been recently deputed to audit Ramnarayan's accounts[161] was appointed Naib in place of the latter with the approval of the Governor[162] on the 1st of August.[163] The new 'Naib' had always been a jealous rival of Ramnarayan, and had tried to displace him. It is highly significant therefore that he was appointed by the Nawab to check the accounts of his predecessor. Not only did he satisfy the Nawab by reporting against Ramnarayan, but also requested Carnac to procure him the 'Niabat' of Patna, and even offered him a bribe of Rs. 50,000. Carnac rightly rebuked him for this insolence.[164] Mr. Vansittart was more complaisant to him and recommended him to the Nawab for the Naib's office.[165]

Ramnarayan failed to submit all his papers even by the end of August. He was then subjected to a severe cross-examination in the Central Revenue office in regard to his accounts, and those of his clerks who had been reported to have absconded at his instance were arrested by the Nawab's men with all their records and books.[166] Numerous discrepancies were found in the accounts.[167] The Nawab then immediately confiscated Ramnarayan's entire property, and seized all that he could secure even from the servants and dependants of the latter.[168] Mr. Vansittart did not

[161] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 43.
[162] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 350, p. 175.
[163] Third Report, 1773, p. 328 (*vide* Mr. McGuire's letter).
[164] Beng. Sel. Com., June 29, 1761. (Carnac's letter.)
[165] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 352, p. 176.
[166] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 707).
[167] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 605).
[168] *Ibid.*, and Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 707).

object to this, and ultimately directed Mr. Hay to deliver Ramnarayan into the Nawab's hands.[169] After having plundered him and all his associates, Mir Qasim put them into prison[170] where they remained till their subsequent massacre. The Select Committee had piously hoped that the Nawab would not go to the length of attacking the life, or honour of Ramnarayan;[171] how little the members knew yet of the Nawab's ferocity and vengeance![172] The signal punishment of Ramnarayan was a significant demonstration of the successful assertion by the Nawab of his complete independence which he had so long eagerly coveted.

A survey of the contemporary evidence in regard to Ramnarayan makes it quite clear that the latter could not satisfactorily account for his late administration, as he had been a lax administrator. The Nawab, however, used this as a pretext for ruining one whom he dreaded as a powerful protégé of the Company's officers. Ramnarayan committed the greatest blunder in completely alienating the Nawab's sympathy by placing too much reliance on his friendship with Carnac and Coote who were really helpless against the decision of the Select Committee. The Nawab's demand of the Naib's accounts according to the latter's original agreement[173] with Mir Jafar was manifestly unjust! The devastation of the country owing to the campaigns of the

[169] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 362, pp. 182-3.

[170] Muzaffar-namah (MS.), p. 320; Siyar, p. 707, Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, MS., p. 774.

[171] Beng. Sel. Com., June 26, 1761.

[172] Mr. McGuire had hoped that Ramnarayan had nothing to fear from the Nawab (*vide* Beng. Pub. Cons., July 13, 1761, for his letter, dated July 5).

[173] For details, *vide* Beng. Sel. Com., May 17, 1761.

Shahzadah, the open disaffection of numerous zemindars, the maintenance of a large army to cope with the invasions, and the unrealised balance from the zemindars were some of the factors which should have been considered while adjusting Ramnarayan's accounts. Besides, the latter agreed to pay in lieu of his arrears 50 lakhs of rupees.[174] The Nawab was not satisfied till he confiscated his whole property and placed him in confinement. It is impossible to defend this vindictive punishment meted out to Ramnarayan. It may be conceded that Mr. Vansittart was not strictly bound to protect[175] a subordinate of the Nawab, if he failed to discharge his duty, but it cannot be forgotten that Ramnarayan held a position which was not exactly similar to that of an ordinary functionary of the Nawab's government, and that he had been induced to offer allegiance to the late Nawab on condition that the Company would safeguard his person and honour.[176] Besides, it is strange that in spite of his payment of the aforesaid sum, he was not restored to his office, nor was he allowed to leave the country even after the confiscation of his whole property. Mr. Vansittart committed a regrettable mistake in acquiescing in his imprisonment. His own defence is weak and unconvincing. He wrote, 'I supported Ramnarayan until it became a dispute whether he should be accountable to the Nawab for the revenues of the province, or not.'[177] He

[174] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 378, pp. 192-3, Third Report. Appendix I, p. 330. (Letter from Mr. Hay, Sept. 7, 1761).

[175] Robert Grant defends the attitude of the Governor, *vide* his 'Sketch,' pp. 203-4.

[176] Beng. Sel. Com., Jan. 24, Feb. 4 and 18, 1758.

[177] Vansittart's 'Letter to the Proprietors of East India Stock,' p. 71.

does not explain why he did not object to the vindictive punishment of Ramnarayan after the confiscation of his entire property. It was practically betraying him in spite of the repeated pledges that had been made in the past.

The Nawab's stay at Patna is of great importance in the history of his short rule. He got rid of the Shahzadah, prevented a close alliance between him and the Company, secured the recall of Carnac and Coote, ruined Ramnarayan and his associates, established his complete control over Patna,[178] and finally freed himself from the control of the Company's officials. In achieving his object, he showed remarkable tact, foresight and finesse, and his shrewd diplomacy certainly proved him more than a match for the well-meaning Governor.

[178] Many of the big zemindars of Bihar, such as Raja Fateh Singh and Raja Buniad Singh, who had been ordered to meet the Nawab were immediately put under arrest as soon as they reached Patna. By such means, the Nawab sought to restore order in Bihar. *Vide* Siyar, p. 708; Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 606); Muzaffarnamah, Alld. Univ. MS., p. 319.

CHAPTER VI

MIR QASIM'S FRONTIER POLICY, 1761-2

Mir Qasim's activities on the borders of Bihar, especially in the Bhojpur country, after the departure of the Shahzadah from Patna in 1761, are extremely important, because they were an integral part of his comprehensive policy of subjugating the distracted province of Bihar, and establishing his authority over the hostile and rebellious 'border-barons' of the frontier district. These 'Bhojpuriah' zemindars had been for some years past a constant source of trouble and anxiety to the Bengal Nawabs, and had always tried to play, each in his own fortified estate, the rôle of daring robber chiefs, in open defiance of the authority of the government. During the confusion caused by the Shahzadah's incursions into Bihar, these ambitious and turbulent landlords[1] were the first to exploit the situation to their advantage. Mir Qasim, therefore, rightly decided to take immediate measures against them, because unless the chronic disaffection and lawlessness in the border districts were stamped out, his sway in Bihar would be but nominal!

The problem was grave, for the 'Bhojpuriah' zemindars were fast becoming by this time a serious political menace which no government could have tolerated. Ever since the Shahzadah had made his appearance in Bihar, they had generally withheld the government revenues, and

[1] Shah Alam Namah, p. 129.

had openly joined him.[2] In fact, no revenue could be had from a large part of the province owing to the rebellious attitude of these zemindars. Clive, during his Bihar expedition, had realized[3] the danger from such landlords as Pahalwan Singh who unhesitatingly joined[4] the Shahzadah, and had tried to subdue them.[5] He had to march against Pahalwan Singh in person in order to bring him to submission,[6] and succeeded for the time being in driving him away.[7] But, the refractory chiefs had not been thoroughly punished, and they raised their heads again during the second appearance of the Shahzadah.[8] Their attitude underwent no change even after the latter's final departure. Some of them were known to be attached to Ramnarayan.[9] This the Nawab could never have forgiven owing to his pronounced animosity against the latter. He would leave no supporter of the ex-Naib unpunished!

The 'Bhojpuriah' zemindars, besides being rebels, committed depredations in the neighbouring country, and some of them were notorious for their daring robberies.[10] The Nawab bitterly complained[11] of their ill-conduct to the Governor who fully agreed with him, and wrote that they were wicked knaves always ready to create disturbances.[12]

[2] Beng. Sel. Com., Dec. 4, 1760.
[3] Beng. Sel. Com., April 20, 1759.
[4] Shah Alam Namah, p. 169.
[5] Beng. Sel. Com., May 4, 1759.
[6] Beng. Sel. Com., May 30, 1759.
[7] Beng. Sel. Com., June 22, 1759.
[8] Beng. Sel. Com., Sept. 11, 1760.
[9] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 708).
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65. p. 12.
[12] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 28, pp. 17-18.

The Nawab also suspected that the Wazir of Oudh was intent on fishing in the troubled waters of Bihar,[13] and that he was trying to foment the disturbances of these zemindars.[14] Mir Qasim had, therefore, the ulterior object of guarding the frontier of Bengal against the Wazir,[15] when he proceeded to settle the affairs of Bhojpur and the adjacent country. The Nawab must have realised that the refractory zemindars would surely be exploited by the Wazir, hence he could not possibly have long tolerated their defiant and lawless activities.

Mir Qasim made unprecedented preparations for marching to the Bhojpur country. Mr. Vansittart heartily approved[16] of this, and offered him every help and encouragement. The Nawab had not forgotten his failure easily to subdue the Raja of Birbhum, and, therefore, he now took every precaution against possible miscarriage of his plans. He not only decided to superintend the operations in person, but took an army large enough to strike terror into the hearts of the rebellious landlords. Ghulam Husain was present at the time when the Nawab started, and could not accompany him owing to private reasons. An idea of the huge preparations can be made from his remark, " He (*i.e.*, the Nawab) was at the head of an army as numerous as the multitude at the Day of Judgment."[17]

[13] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 11.

[14] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 291, pp. 138-9.

[15] Beng. Sel. Com., March 28, 1761. (*Vide* Carnac's reference to a Jesuit's account of the Wazir's designs on Bengal in his letter, dated March 20, 1761).

[16] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 423, p. 214.

[17] Siyar, Raymond's translation, Calcutta Reprint, II, p. 425, *Vide* Text, p. 709.

The writer obviously means that the Nawab had mobilised an unusually strong force.

A point that should be noted in this connection is that he did not take many English troops. This must have been by design. Mir Qasim did not trust the English officers after his recent experience of the attitude of Carnac and Coote towards himself. In fact, he seems to have definitely determined henceforth not to depend on the help of the English forces; and it was at this period that, in spite of the mild protest[18] of Mr. Vansittart, he began organising a new army of his own under officers like Gurgin Khan. The Governor, on being informed of the Nawab's desire to march against the enemies without a sufficient number of English troops, wrote to him that he should take more English troops in order to terrorise the disaffected zemindars and even proposed to send Coote to help the Nawab.[19] Mir Qasim who bore a grudge against Coote would, however, have been the last person to seek the latter's assistance, and so he politely refused the offer of the Governor.[20]

The expedition further demonstrates the settled policy of the Nawab to crush the power of the zemindars in his 'Subah,' but Mir Qasim seems to have aimed also at the extirpation of all the powerful 'barons' in the country,[21] whom he considered to be his potential enemies. The offensive planned against the zemindars of Shahabad was

[18] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 286, p. 134.

[19] *Ibid.*, No. 425, p. 215, and No. 436, p. 221.

[20] *Ibid.*, 1762, No. 3, pp. 1-2.

[21] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 324).
Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 772).
Siyar, p. 708, etc.

to be the prelude to his systematic extirpation of the land-holders as a class. The Nawab's Bhojpur expedition is thus an important incident in the evenful history of his short rule. It serves to indicate not only some of the acute problems of administration and frontier defence that engaged the attention of the Nawab, but also illustrates the growing desire of the latter to establish an undisputed sway over his dominions in a manner that would tend to bring about freedom from his dependence on the English.

The Nawab left Patna early in November,[22] 1761, just before[23] the arrival of Mr. Ellis. He had sent Mir Raushan Ali Khan, a trusted officer, with some English troops and artillery in advance.[24] He himself took as large a force as he could muster.[25] The very appearance of such a large army was sufficient to convince Pahalwan Singh and others that it would be futile to offer resistance. They consequently escaped into Oudh leaving the Nawab free to regulate the frontier 'parganahs' according to his own scheme.[26] The opposition of the zemindars was thus feeble, and the Nawab's troops quickly took possession of the principal forts belonging to them.[27] Early in December, the Nawab informed the Governor of the capture of the fort of Judgepur.[28] Within a fortnight, another important fort

[22] According to Muzaffar-namah, p. 322, "11th Rabi-us-Sani, 1175."

[23] Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 296.

[24] Muzaffar-namah, p. 323.

[25] Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, p. 775.

[26] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 606).

[27] Muzaffar-namah, p. 323.

[28] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 12.

belonging to Pahalwan Singh, Bhekary, was taken.[29] By the beginning of January, 1762, the Nawab was in possession of all the forts.[30] The Rajas of Bhojpur crossed the Ganges, and took shelter in Ghazipur, or in the territory of Balwant Singh, zemindar of Benares.[31]

The way in which Mir Qasim dealt with the estates of the runaway zemindars is interesting. He plundered[32] and ultimately confiscated all of these, and appointed his own 'tahsildars' in the various 'parganahs' into which the whole of the Bhojpur country was divided.[33] A regular garrison was stationed in every fort, and the retainers of the zemindars were either chastised, or driven out of the country, and their whole property confiscated.[34] The Nawab's expedition was successful in every way, and the district of Shahabad was satisfactorily settled.[35] But his anxiety was not yet over! He had to guard the province against all possible attacks, strengthen the various frontier outposts, and arrive at an understanding with Shuja-ud-daulah, the Wazir of Oudh.

It was on this occasion that the Nawab sought to win the good will, and, if possible, alliance of his powerful neighbour, the Wazir. The exact motives which actuated him cannot be ascertained. On the one hand, Mr. Ellis and his party declared that the Nawab endeavoured to conclude

[29] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 436, p. 221.

[30] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 3, pp. 1-2.

[31] Siyar, p. 709.

[32] Riyaz (A.S.B., Text, p. 381).

[33] Siyar, p. 709; Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 15, pp. 10-11.

[34] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 606).

[35] Beng. Sel. Com., Jan. 16, 1762 (*vide* Letter from the Nawab, dated December 25, 1761).

a treaty with Shuja-ud-daulah with a view to oust the Europeans from the country. Mr. Hastings and the Governor, on the other hand, disbelieved the rumour of a secret alliance of the Nawab and the Wazir against the English.

The Nawab's recent conduct gave grounds for suspicion to a certain extent:—

(*i*) His continued stay[36] on the borders of Bihar, even after the flight of the 'Bhojpuriah' zemindars was liable to be misunderstood.

(*ii*) He carried on some correspondence[37] with the Wazir, the nature of which was not known to the outside world.

(*iii*) He delivered up an important fort which he had taken from one of the 'Bhojpuriah' zemindars to the Wazir.[38]

(*iv*) Mr. Ellis reported that he had been informed by a Jesuit priest at Lucknow of Mir Qasim's eagerness to conclude an alliance with the Wazir against the English.[39]

(*v*) Coote was similarly informed by Shitab Ray of the Nawab's anti-English attitude.[40]

[36] Letter from Mr. Hastings to Coote, May 14, 1762 (*vide* Gleig's Memoir, I, p. 114).

[37] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 12.

[38] Letter from Mr. Hastings to the Governor, Jan. 26, 1762 (*vide* Gleig's Memoir, I, p. 113).

[39] Beng. Sel. Com., April 19, 1762. (Letter from Ellis, April 11, 1762).

[40] Shitab Ray to Coote—received March 12, 1762 (Orme MSS.), *vide* Prof. Dodwell's "Dupleix and Clive," p. 220 (footnote).

(*vi*) The Nawab's recent re-organisation of his army and collection of war materials on an unprecedented scale were[41] also suspicious.

Mr. Hastings, however, wrote[42] to Coote, "But that Cosseim Ali Cawn would invite so powerful an enemy into his own territories with no other view than to expel the English—the very proposition (not to mention the strong tincture which it bears of prejudice) carries on it such self-evident marks of inconsistency that the Nawab must be stark mad before I would give it so much credit as even to debate the truth of it." The arguments which can possibly be advanced in favour of the Nawab are as follows:—

(*i*) Mir Qasim had always regarded the Wazir as an enemy and rival who coveted the province of Bihar, and only a few months back he had represented to the Governor that the Wazir intended to espouse the cause of the disaffected people in Bengal.[43]

(*ii*) The Nawab could not possibly have afforded to lose the good will of the Wazir at a time, when the 'Bhojpuriah' zemindars were escaping to Oudh. He frankly informed the Governor of his understanding with Shuja-ud-daulah in regard to this matter, and forwarded to the former a letter from the

[41] Siyar, p. 708.
[42] Gleig's Memoir, I, p. 116.
[43] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 8.

Wazir, wherein the latter agreed that the runaways of either government would be given up.[44] This mutual agreement was certainly essential to the security of the frontier districts, and the Nawab was shrewd enough to secure the promise of the Wazir to deliver up the malcontent zemindars who had taken refuge in Oudh.

(*iii*) The Wazir really wanted to be on good terms with the Nawab, and had no design against the English. Mr. Hastings[45] writes, "Shuja-ud-daulah is fixed in his design of carrying the King to Delhi, and is willing to keep on a footing of friendship with Cosseim Ali Cawn who might prove an obstacle to his enterprise, or attack his country in his absence."

(*iv*) His long stay on the borders of Bihar was professed to be due to the obvious delay in fully settling the affairs of Bhojpur.[46] The Nawab, according to Mr. Hastings, was detained for a special reason. He started dismissing here all his former troops so as to expel them from the country conveniently and without any loss of time.[47]

One aspect of the Nawab's policy during this period needs more than a passing mention. It not only shows his

[44] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 12.

[45] Gleig's Memoir, I, p. 115.

[46] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 99, p. 54.

[47] Gleig's Memoir, I, p. 114.

innate vindictiveness and blood-thirsty character, but also throws a lurid light on the characteristic tyranny of his administration. The Nawab was determined to adopt ruthless measures to punish anyone whom he suspected to be in any way connected with the malcontents. Hundreds of spies were let loose to unearth any trace of disaffection that could be proved. Unscrupulous as they were, they began indiscriminately accusing people on the flimsiest evidence.[48] The Nawab made an example of the alleged offenders by ordering wholesale executions. Ghulam Husain who has exposed the glaring unfairness of the mock trials held in this connection says[49] in regard to five persons (whom he happened to know), " Indeed, I never could find the particular guilt of any of them . . . . I hold it from the mouth of several persons worthy of credit that not one of those five persons had committed any such crime as might have deserved death; they even added, that every one of them had fallen a victim to conjecture and suspicion."

Among the numerous persons thus punished on account of mere suspicion, the cases of Shah Saadullah and Sitaram may be particularly mentioned. The following charges[50] were levelled against them. They were alleged: —

(*i*) to have secretly encouraged the rebellious zemindars.

[48] Siyar, p. 710.

[49] Raymond's translation of Siyar, II, p. 428 (*vide* Text, p. 710).

[50] Siyar, p. 709.
Muzaffar-namah, p. 324.
Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, p. 775.
Vansittart's Narrative, II, pp. 14—16.

(*ii*) to have aimed at the overthrow and assassination of the Nawab himself.

(*iii*) to be in correspondence with the fugitive zemindars, and some of their alleged letters were intercepted.

(*iv*) Sitaram was further reported to have actually informed a zemindar of the date on which the Nawab would start for the Bhojpur country.

Their guilt was declared proved by a few intercepted letters alleged to have been written by them. As a matter of fact, their guilt amounted to no more than bare suspicion. Ghulam Husain had an opportunity[51] to inspect those letters,[52] and he was convinced that they were not genuine. He writes,[53] " On casting my eyes upon one of them I found that there were erasures and corrections, although done with a deal of art, and on that account I concluded that, possibly, the writer's death had some other secret cause. I conjectured that letters might have been written after the

[51] Siyar, p. 711.

[52] *Vide* translation of a letter alleged to have been written by Sitaram to Pahalwan Singh.

(Vansittart's Narrative, II, p. 15.)

Mr. Vansittart regarded those letters as genuine, but rejected a number of equally objectionable letters alleged to have been written by the Nawab himself to Turab Ali Khan, Khwajah Petruse, and Khan Bahadur as forgeries (*vide* Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 125, p. 65, and Narrative, II, p. 17). He did not take the trouble to enquire, if the former letters had also been forged, simply because he could never disbelieve the testimony of his ' protégé.'

[53] Raymond's translation of Siyar, II, p. 429. (*Vide* Text, p. 711).

death of those men, and sealed with their seals, containing whatever their enemies had been pleased to insert. Some of the erasures and corrections I shewed to Doctor Fullarton."

Although the author of the Siyar does not suggest the 'secret cause' of their death, it can be inferred from certain facts known about them, which may be thus summarised:—

(*i*) Saadullah, a powerful 'jamadar' and trusted officer under Ramnarayan, had acquired a tremendous influence in Shahabad by virtue of his long experience, and local knowledge of the country, and, worse still in the eyes of the Nawab, he was known to be attached to Mir Jafar.[54] The Nawab, therefore, must have regarded him as a dangerous person, and so the latter was put to death on a plausible excuse.

(*ii*) Sitaram, the chief finance minister of the Nawab, was reputed to be extremely rich,[55] and it is not unlikely that the Nawab wanted to get rid of his 'Diwan' not only for his wealth,[56] but on account of his previous connection with the house of Ali Vardi Khan,[57] which made him dangerous. The Nawab had appointed him just to reorganise

[54] Siyar, p. 710.

[55] Letter from Hastings to Coote. (Gleig's Memoir, I, p. 115.)

[56] The Nawab had already ruined many such people whose only fault was their enormous wealth! (Muzaffar-namah, p. 304, p. 334, etc.).

[57] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 350).

his finances, and now that the accounts of the late administration were complete he had no longer use for his services.

These executions were obviously meant to strike terror into the hearts of all those who might be inimical to the new Nawab. This object of the latter was realised before long. There was general consternation, and according to Ghulam Husain, " There was no man in his Court, however considerable, who durst speak a wrong word, or who, whether near or far, could sleep in his bed easy and in peace of mind."[58] The Nawab was thus, through a virtual massacre of political suspects,[59] able to restore quiet in the frontier districts.[60]

After chastising the zemindars of Shahabad, the Nawab sent an expedition against the zemindar of Bettia. One of the objects of the Nawab appears to have been to secure the strong and strategic fortress of Bettia, and thus test the efficiency of the new regiments trained by his commander-in-chief, Gurgin Khan. The attack against Bettia was, however, principally due to the general policy of establishing complete control over the frontier districts of Bihar, and the avowed object was only to punish the unruly zemindar.[61] The Nawab took the usual precaution of sending a large force, lest there might be delay in capturing the

[58] Raymond's translation of Siyar, II, p. 429 (Text, p. 710).

[59] Muzaffar-namah, p. 324; Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, 606).

[60] Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, p. 777. According to Muzaffar-namah, Shahabad was so cruelly devastated under the Nawab's orders that people died of starvation and had to sell their children for a seer of rice!

[61] Siyar, p. 713.

fortress. Bahadur Ali Khan was given the command.[62] He was to be assisted by a number of other officers, and was further given charge of four regiments recently trained by Gurgin Khan.[63] The result was a foregone conclusion, Bettia was easily captured early in March, 1762.[64]

The Nawab then turned his attention to the southern part of the frontier, and went personally during the same month[65] to secure his control over Rohtasgarh[66] which was of very great strategic importance. He had a number of objects in view. He not only wanted to inspect the famous fort personally [67] and settle the affairs of the country on this side, but also determined to appoint his own officers[68] to guard the entrance into Bengal from this side, and watch the activities of the fugitive zemindars[69] like Pahalwan Singh. The Nawab did not stay for more than one day in the fort.[70] Here too he showed his characteristic jealousy and suspicion of the officers in-charge of the fort, and placed under arrest Naqi Ali Khan[71] who had been in-charge of

[62] *Ibid.*

[63] Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, p. 778. According to this authority, four regiments were sent. The Siyar simply gives, "Some regiments of Tilangas disciplined by Gurgin Khan."

[64] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 13.

[65] According to Muzaffar-namah (p. 324) "beginning of Shaban, 1175."

[66] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 49, p. 32.

[67] Muzaffar-namah, p. 324.

[68] Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, p. 777; Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 606).

[69] Siyar, p. 711.

[70] Muzaffar-namah, p. 324.

[71] Siyar, p. 711.

the garrison for a long time past, and Shaho Mal,[72] Deputy Governor of Rohtasgarh. They were really guilty of no crime, and were, like so many others, the victims of the Nawab's inordinate suspicion, because the reason of their arrest and disgrace has nowhere been mentioned.

The Nawab was now in a position to make all the necessary arrangements for the administration and defence of Shahabad.[73] Mir Raushan Ali Khan, the Paymaster, was posted with his whole brigade of horse and foot.[74] The total of the forces left in Shahabad amounted to about[75] seven thousand horse and 'barqandazes.' This shows that the Nawab intended to guard against possible disturbances, or attacks, and crush all lawlessness in the neighbourhood. Nisar Ali Khan was given the command of Rohtasgarh.[76] Mir Mahdi Khan[77] was entrusted with the governorship of Sasseram, and he was to be assisted by another officer, Shah Muhammad Akbar Khan. Samroo, the notorious European renegade, who had entered the Nawab's service, was posted at Buxar with four regiments of infantry[78] to ensure the safety of that part, and he earned the esteem of the Nawab by massacring about six hundred 'Bhojpuriah' robbers in cold blood[79]—an act which subsequently entitled him to the

[72] *Ibid.*; Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 606).

[73] Scrafton's Observations, p. 33.

[74] Siyar, p. 711; Muzaffar-namah, p. 329; Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, p. 777.

[75] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 28, p. 17.

[76] Siyar, p. 711; Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, p. 777.

[77] Siyar, p. 711.

[78] *Ibid.*

[79] Raymond's footnote to his translation of Siyar, II, p. 430.

atrocious commission of massacring unarmed English prisoners at Patna.

During his short stay in the frontier districts of Bihar, the Nawab had established his authority, driven out the powerful zemindars, placed garrisons in the chief forts, made the most advantageous settlement of the revenue, appointed his own nominees to important posts of command, and instituted a reign of terror by indiscriminately imprisoning, or executing all those of whom he was in any way mistrustful. In short, he had not only shown a remarkable energy in thoroughly reducing the lawless districts to his obedience, but had also given an unmistakable proof of his firm determination to play the rôle of a stern despot. His whole purpose seems to have been to impress upon the people the fact that the laxity of the former régime was at an end!

CHAPTER VII

THE BEGINNING OF MIR QASIM'S DISPUTES WITH THE ENGLISH

The disputes between Mir Qasim and the Company's servants, which ultimately culminated in the downfall of the former, assumed a serious character after the arrival of Mr. Ellis as Chief of the factory at Patna in November, 1761. The Nawab was then busy chastising the refractory zemindars of Bihar. His complaints against Ellis deserve close examination, because they were not only numerous, but sufficiently grave. It has been the fashion to condemn Ellis for his defiant attitude towards the Nawab; but the real explanation of the latter's prejudice against the former has generally been overlooked. Ellis was no doubt hot-headed and impatient, but the Nawab was equally selfish and vindictive, and deliberately aimed at removing the former from Patna by all possible means.

The Nawab could on no account have tolerated the presence of Ellis at Patna, and he needed only some plausible excuses for openly denouncing him. It must be remembered that the Nawab had procured the recall of Carnac and Coote in this very manner, and his previous success led him to adopt the same plan in regard to Ellis also. Little did he realise that on this occasion, his friend and patron, Mr. Vansittart, had no more the majority on his side in the Council, and so was powerless to punish Ellis in any way. The Nawab believed that he would be able to get Ellis removed, only if he persisted in complain-

ing against him on some ground, or the other. The reasons why he bore a grudge against Ellis may thus be indicated:—

(*i*) It was the settled policy of the Nawab to stop all possible interference of the English officers in his government, and he consistently strove to render himself free from their dictation. So far he had been encouraged by Mr. Vansittart in the realisation of this object, and he now viewed with disgust the attitude of Ellis who certainly did not acquiesce in the policy of allowing the Nawab to free himself absolutely from English control, and who seems to have been determined to oppose the policy of non-intervention;

(*ii*) The Nawab knew full well that Ellis had been an avowed opponent of the late revolution, and he, therefore, regarded him in no other light than as a personal enemy. He would thus be the last person to tolerate the latter's presence at Patna, especially because he intended to shift his permanent headquarters from Bengal to Bihar;

(*iii*) Ellis became further hateful to the Nawab when it was reported to him that a party of English officers including the former were plotting his overthrow, and trying to get the late revolution annulled by the Directors. Mr. Hastings wrote to the Governor on May 26, 1762, "He (*i.e.*, the Nawab) has been told that Messrs. Amyatt, Ellis, and Carnac have in their letters to their friends in England used every argument to procure an order from the Company to annul the measures taken in favour of him; and represented his character in the most hateful terms; that Mr. Fullarton was also charged to assist in person their project of deposing him; and that they have sworn together to his ruin; that they have discovered a flaw in his title to

the Subahship from our treaty, etc., etc." A letter from the Directors received at this time was so vaguely worded that it was construed by Mr. Vansittart's opponents to be a disapprobation of the revolution. This too was duly reported to the Nawab who apprehended that Ellis would become a centre of attraction for all those who might be disaffected towards himself. The Nawab felt that he could not be safe so long as Ellis continued to stay at Patna; and

(*iv*) The Nawab, it is clear, had determined to stop the private inland trade of the Company's servants, which he deemed to be a political danger to his government. The fact that Ellis furiously opposed the Nawab's officials in their attempt to impede this inland trade aroused the bitter indignation of the Nawab. Indeed, his quarrels with Ellis brought into sudden prominence the whole question of the inland trade, and the right of the Company's servants to exemption from the payment of duty.

It is evident from the above account that the Nawab regarded Ellis as a dangerous opponent, and only needed certain plausible arguments to make out a case against him. These arguments were soon supplied by some hasty, or tactless measures of Ellis. The Nawab did not fail to exploit them to the fullest extent, and Ellis insisted on vindicating what he regarded as his legitimate rights. Thus, a serious misunderstanding grew, and this could never have ceased, unless one, or the other completely yielded. Neither could possibly have yielded, and, therefore, a reconciliation between the two was really impossible. As the Nawab's ultimate downfall was hastened by his quarrels with Ellis, these require some elucidation.

At the very outset, Ellis was annoyed at the refusal of Rajballabh, the Naib of Patna, to receive a visit from him without orders from the Nawab,[1] although he himself had given the Naib a courteous reception when the latter came to see him.[2] This naturally excited the suspicion that Rajballabh must have been prohibited from being intimate with the new Chief whose appointment the Nawab had not welcomed.[3] It was only after the Governor had formally protested against the discourteous attitude of the Naib that the Nawab permitted the latter to wait on Ellis.[4]

The earliest act of Ellis, which aroused criticism, was the order to arrest an officer of the government named Munseram, on a complaint of a 'gumashtah' of the factory.[5] The charge against Munseram was that he had stopped some opium belonging to Mr. Hay in spite of there being a regular 'dastak' with it. This Ellis naturally regarded as a deliberate attack on English trade, and could never have forgiven it on any account. High-handed as his action might appear, it was certainly not a new thing for the Company's servants to punish the Nawab's people,[6] when they obstructed English trade, and this practice had even been permitted in the time of Mir Jafar.[7]

[1] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 434, p. 220.

[2] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 435, p. 220.

[3] Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 297, and Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 10.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 297.

[6] Scrafton's observations, p. 34.

[7] *Vide* Mir Jafar's Sanad of 1757. The prerogative had been originally granted by Muhammad Jafar Khan in a charter of 1724 (Fourth Report, 1773, App. No. 4, Extract No. 22).

But Mir Qasim wanted to stop all this. Ellis, however, could not be condemned for an act which had neither been uncommon, nor illegal so far. It would, however, have been more considerate on his part, if he had informed the Nawab of this beforehand,—but his order was not executed by Capt. Carstairs who simply requested the Nawab[8] to reprimand the insolent 'harkarah.'

The Nawab's anger[9] knew no bounds, when Ellis not only refused to consider his charges against Mr. Gray, chief of the factory at Malda, but accused Mir Sher Ali, the Naib at Purnea, and the local zemindars of gross insolence and misbehaviour.[10] It was certainly a fact that the Company's business had been too frequently impeded[11] by the Naib and his men, and numerous formal complaints[12] had been made to the Nawab, but to no purpose. Mr. Hastings himself had complained[13] bitterly against a local zemindar. What Mr. Gray did was to arrest the latter's 'peshkar' after he had vainly[14] asked for redress from the Naib. The Nawab's annoyance was due to the fact that he considered such actions of the Company's servants to be

[8]Letter from Capt. Carstairs to the Nawab, dated the 31st of Jan., 1762.

[9] Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 302.

[10] Letter from the Nawab to Mr. Ellis, dated Jan. 22, 1762, and the reply from Mr. Ellis, dated Feb. 4, 1762, and Tans., P.L.I., 1762, Nos. 20 and 21, pp. 13-14.

[11] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 431, p. 218.

[12] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 432, p. 218.

[13] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 21, p. 13.

[14] *Ibid.* The Governor himself wrote to Mir Sher Ali on the subject, and requested him to punish the zemindar, but the Naib paid no heed to it.

an unwarranted interference in his internal administration.

Then came the affair of Khwajah Antoine, which further intensified the Nawab's dislike to Ellis. Antoine was an officer of the government employed as a collector at Punchmahla in the district of Monghyr.[15] A 'gumashtah' of the Company was taking some goods from the 'parganah' of Mulky with a 'dastak' from Ellis;[16] but Antoine told him that the Company's 'dastak' was insufficient, and gave him another 'dastak' under the seal of Syda Ram, Naib of Khwajah Gregory, who held the lease of the 'ghats' in that part of the country.[17] Besides, the Armenian officer was also guilty of interference in the Company's saltpetre monopoly.[18] The facts of the case are these: Khwajah Gregory required five maunds of saltpetre, and he directed Antoine to secure it for him from the Company's 'nunias.' Antoine sent for one of the latter, and compelled him to bring the said amount of saltpetre. This was secretly conveyed by him to Khwajah Gregory. One of the Company's local 'gumashtahs' protested against this, but Antoine insisted that he had every right to do so.[19] This was reported to Ellis who immediately put Antoine under arrest, and sent him to Calcutta for exemplary punishment.[20] At

[15] Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 302.

[16] Letter from Mr. Ellis to the Governor and Council, dated Jan. 26, 1762.

[17] Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 8, 1762.

[18] Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 11, 1762, and Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 715).

[19] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 30, p. 20.

[20] Letter from the Chief and Council at Patna to the Governor, Jan. 28, 1762.

Calcutta, Antoine was examined by the Council, and he confessed that he did give the 'dastak' of his master to enable the 'gumashtah' to get the goods easily passed at the ghats belonging to him, and as regards the saltpetre, he admitted that a 'nunia' of the 'Sarkar' had asked him to purchase ten rupees worth of saltpetre which he secured from a 'nunia' of the Company.[21] The Nawab, however, resented the arrest of his subordinate, and strongly complained to Ellis saying,[22] "It ill became you to seize an officer of my Government." The point at issue was that Antoine had not only indirectly questioned the title of the Company's 'dastak,' but had also definitely infringed its monopoly of saltpetre under the instructions of a high officer of the Government. Ellis was, therefore, on principle right when he demanded a signal punishment for this offence, lest it should form a bad example to others. He was also justified in bringing this matter to the notice of the authorities at Calcutta. He also duly informed the Nawab of his action in this matter.[23] Ellis can be blamed only for his tactless haste in sending the Armenian to Calcutta in irons[24] like an ordinary criminal without waiting for the Nawab's opinion[25] in regard to the latter's offence.

[21] Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 11, 1762.
[22] Letter from the Nawab to Ellis (Feb. 4 or 5), 1762.
[23] Letter from Ellis to the Nawab, dated Feb. 4, 1762.
[24] Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 303.
[25] The Nawab received a highly coloured account of the affair from Rajballabh who wrote, "A small quantity of saltpetre which he (*i.e.*, Antoine) was accused of having plundered from the factory . . ." (*Vide* letter from the Nawab, Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 22, 1762). The Nawab wrote, ". . . for a trifling cause, that gentleman (Ellis) has disgraced and carried away Coja Antoon . . ." The Council, however, did not agree with the Nawab that it was a trifling cause!

But, in fairness to Ellis, it must be added that he had applied to the Government on previous occasions in similar cases, but had not received any redress, so he sent the Armenian to Calcutta on this occasion.[26]

Antoine was detained at Calcutta for one day only, and sent back to the Nawab for proper punishment, because the Council was convinced that he had " taken upon himself an authority which he had no right to."[27] The Nawab had to dismiss him from his service.[28]

The next important dispute between the Nawab's officers, and Ellis was in connexion with a small gate[29] of the city of Patna, which was nearest to the factory. The Nawab ordered his Naib at Patna to shut up this gate,[30] thus the people at the factory were suddenly deprived of a short cut into the city. The real motive of the Nawab seems to have been to prevent the factory people from having an easy access to the city, but Ellis was perfectly justified in complaining against this action, as it needlessly inconvenienced the folk at the factory by compelling them to go about six hundred yards round to the west gate of the city. Ellis rightly contended that there was no necessity at all for closing this gate at least in the daytime.[31]

[26] Beng. Pub. Cons., June 21, 1762.

[27] Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 11, 1762, Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 23, Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 304.

[28] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 13.

[29] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 43, p. 28.
[30] Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 22, 1762.

[31] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 22, 1762 (*vide* also letter from Ellis, March 14, 1762).

It was, however, the Monghyr fort incident which aroused the fiercest condemnation of Ellis by the Nawab, and therefore it deserves a close examination. Desertions among the Company's troops were at this time getting frequent at Patna, and Ellis complained of it to the Council at Calcutta early in February, 1762.[32] In fact, he was extremely uneasy for this, when a report was made to him that European deserters had taken shelter in the Monghyr fort.[33] He at once decided to take strong measures for the immediate arrest of these deserters, and requested Rajballabh to write to Shujan Singh, the 'qalahdar,' to deliver up the deserters. This Rajballabh promised to do—whereupon Ellis sent a sergeant with a Company of sepoys to escort them back. When the party reached the fort, Shujan Singh not only refused to let the sergeant enter the fort, but threatened to fire upon them. On being informed of this, Ellis directed the sepoys to wait peacefully till the Nawab's orders reached the 'qalahdar,' and asked the Governor to request the Nawab to send a 'parwanah' to Shujan Singh permitting a search of the fort by the sergeant. The Governor did request[34] the Nawab to do so, but in vain. The Nawab wilfully distorted the whole affair just to condemn[35] the action of Ellis in the bitterest of terms.

[32] Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 11, 1762 (*vide* also letter from Ellis, February 2, 1762).

[33] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 4, 1762 (*vide* also letter from Ellis, February 23, 1762).

[34] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 42, p. 28.

[35] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 13.

The complaints of the Nawab against Ellis in this connexion show to what extent he could deliberately misrepresent the incident. They may thus be summarised[36]:—

(*i*) "Two or three Companies of sepoys" were sent by Ellis to Monghyr.

(*ii*) They "marched against" the fort, and "surrounded" it;

(*iii*) The 'qalahdar' "Sat within in fear of his life and honour";

(*iv*) "I am ignorant," wrote the Nawab, "what provocation has induced the gentleman to send sepoys to attack the fort, . . . and thus commit hostilities";

(*v*) The sepoys went 'in a treacherous and designing manner . . . '; and

(*vi*) Rajballabh totally denied[37] having sent any instructions to the 'qalahdar' on behalf of Ellis, and the Nawab wrote, "who is Rajballabh that Mr. Ellis should write to him?"

[36] Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 22, 1762 (*vide* Letter from the Nawab to the Governor, letter from Rajballabh to the Nawab, letter from Shujan Singh to Syda Ram).

[37] Letter from Rajballabh to the Nawab, March 26, 1762: "I know not in truth anything of this affair, neither did any person ever demand, or I write such a letter."

That the above accusations were all groundless and malicious can be easily shown[38]:—

(*i*) Ellis sent no more than one Company of sepoys;

(*ii*) They did not surround the fort, and when the 'qalahdar', would not allow the sergeant to enter the fort, they posted themselves at four, or five miles distance, where they were ordered to remain, not by Ellis alone, but by the Council at Calcutta;[39]

(*iii*) Far from being anxious for his life and honour, the gallant 'qalahdar' was rude to the sergeant and threatened to fire unless he kept his men off the reach of the guns. To prove his earnestness and loyalty, he even sent for four thousand bullets and some lead,[40] and even stopped the supply of provisions to make it impossible for the sepoys to stay longer;

(*iv*) The Nawab's description of the sending of a Company of sepoys to bring the deserters back as an attack on the fort is obviously an astounding perversion of truth, indicative of his bitter rancour and prejudice;

[38] Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 22, 1762. (Letter from Ellis to the Governor, Feb. 13, 1762).

Beng. Pub. Cons., March 22, 1762. (Letter from Ellis to the Governor, March 14, 1762).

[39] Vansittart's Narrative, II, pp. 12-13.

[40] Letter from Shujan Singh to Diwan Syda Ram. (Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 333).

(*v*) The charge that the troops aimed at treacherously surprising the fort is equally fantastic, and is only another instance of the Nawab's way of describing things; and finally,

(*vi*) Ellis did inform Rajballabh of the affair of the deserters, and did secure his promise to write to Monghyr. It is unthinkable that Ellis could have believed that the 'qalahdar' would allow the search of his fort without instructions from the higher authorities. Ellis was perfectly justified in considering that Rajballabh, being the Naib at Patna, did possess the authority to give the necessary instructions to the 'qalahdar' at Monghyr. There is no reason to suppose that Ellis told a falsehood when he insisted that he had asked Rajballabh to send a letter to Monghyr.[41] It is clear that[42] either Ghulam Muhammad, the intermediary, or Rajballabh had spoken a falsehood.

The Governor wrote to the Nawab drawing his attention to the material difference between his version of the incident, and that given by Ellis,[43] and requested him to permit a search of the fort by the sergeant.[44] The Nawab was further told that an undue prolongation of such a

[41] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 22, 1762.

[42] Even Mr. Vansittart thought that the intermediary might have "invented that answer of Rajballabh." (Narrative, I, p. 208.)

[43] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 39, p. 26.

[44] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 42, p. 28.

trivial affair was extremely undesirable.[45] The Governor ultimately proposed to send two sergeants, and several 'tilangas' to search the fort.[46] But this the Nawab would not allow! He objected to the proposed search, as he thought it would humiliate him before the public.[47] Finally, it was decided to send Mr. Hastings and Lt. Ironside to visit the fort, and report on the affair[48] simply because the Nawab would never allow Ellis to search the fort.[49] He, however, did not object[50] to the deputation of the former gentlemen.[51]

The Nawab's complaints against Ellis began to be so numerous and bitter that Mr. Vansittart considered it necessary[52] to depute Mr. Hastings to bring about a reconciliation between them, and allay the Nawab's suspicions of the Company's intentions to depose him. In short, Mr. Hastings was instructed[53] to examine the cause of the misunderstanding between the Nawab and Ellis, and soothe the former's irritated feelings by reconciling matters. He was further directed by the dissenting majority in the Council to demand the sum of 20 lakhs of rupees for which

[45] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 46, p. 30.

[46] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 48, p. 31.

[47] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 13, Vansittart's Narrative, II, p. 7.

[48] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 67, p. 41.

[49] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 13.

[50] *Ibid.*

[51] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 25, 1762.

[52] Vansittart's Narrative, II, p. 21.

[53] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 25, 1762.

the Nawab had given a bond to the Select Committee on September 27, 1760.[54]

Mr. Hastings left Calcutta on April 9, 1762, and on his way to Sasseram which[55] the Nawab had made his head-quarters at this time he visited the Monghyr fort on April 27, along with Lt. Ironside to make an enquiry regarding the deserters, but did not find any trace of them in spite of a careful search.[56] Mr. Hastings reached Sasseram on May 9,[57] and was cordially received by the Nawab.[58] The

[54] *Ibid.*, Mr. Amyatt was responsible for this resolution. In fact large sums had already been paid, and Mr. Amyatt knew this. The Resolution was therefore a fling at Mr. Vansittart. The main arguments of Mr. Amyatt and his supporters were sufficiently plausible:—

(*i*) The money should be credited to the account of the Company, lest it should be thought that the revolution had been brought about for private profit. (Mr. Amyatt.)

(*ii*) The bond had not been formally returned by an order of the Council. (Mr. Hay.)

(*iii*) "If the Nawab refuses, which I think he will and ought, we are justified at once; and if he grants it, this is so much gained to the Company." (Major Carnac.)

Mr. Vansittart's opposition was neither convincing, nor straightforward. He lacked the courage to declare that payments had been made to some members of the Select Committee (*vide* his Narrative, II, pp. 29—35). It may be noted that he himself had not accepted anything so far, as he received his share during his visit to Monghyr.

[55] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 709).

[56] Letter from Mr. Hastings to the Governor, April 28, 1762 (*vide* Gleig's Memoir, I, p. 111). Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 14. Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 314. Letter from Lt. Ironside to the Governor, April 27, 1762.

[57] Letter from Mr. Hastings to Coote, May 14, 1762 (*vide* Gleig's Memoir, I, p. 114).

[58] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS.), p. 329. "Shams-ud-daulah sent Mr. Hastings who was a great diplomat to Sasseram for pacifying Ali Jah."

latter strongly repudiated any desire on his part to break with the English, although he maintained that he had much to complain against the servants of the Company, and roundly charged Ellis with attempting to bring about a rupture between him and the Company.[59] It is clear that the Nawab was extremely flattered by the visit[60] of Mr. Hastings, and he may have felt that the latter would, if properly humoured, support his cause at Calcutta, and side with him in his disputes with Ellis and others. The Nawab was fully successful in persuading his guest to concur with him in his opinion of Ellis, and Mr. Hastings wrote to the Governor strongly condemning the intractable attitude of the Chief.[61]

The real point at issue was not the petty quarrels of the Nawab with Ellis, but the regulation of the private inland trade of the Company's servants, and the putting of it on a satisfactory basis. Mr. Hastings had been directed by the Governor to settle the question with the Nawab, if possible.[62] The principal among the Nawab's recent complaints in regard to this matter were as follows:—

(*i*) The chiefs of the factories, the Nawab alleged, made use of their sepoys on the slightest pretexts, and this, he wanted, should be forbidden;[63]

[59] Letter from Mr. Hastings to the Governor, May 13, 1762. (Narrative, II, p. 59).

[60] Muzaffar-namah, p. 329.

[61] Letter from Mr. Hastings to the Govenor, May 26, 1762. (Narrative, II, p. 63).

[62] Letter from the Governor to Mr. Hastings, May 2, 1762.

[63] Beng. Pub. Cons., June 21, 1762.

(*ii*) The Company's 'gumashtahs' were reported to be constantly impeding the public business,[64] and

(*iii*) Merchants without 'dastaks' carried goods on their boats hoisting English colours to evade the payment of duties.[65]

Mr. Vansittart had proposed certain regulations for putting an end to the alleged abuse of the English flag, and these Mr. Hastings now explained to the Nawab.[66] The proposed regulations may thus be summed up:—

(*i*) The 'daroghahs' of the 'chaukis' should insist on being shown a 'dastak' for every English boat;

(*ii*) A boat with English colours, but without a 'dastak,' should be stopped, and notice should be given to the nearest factory, if the goods be English property;

(*iii*) Faujdars should punish the 'gumashtahs' who commit acts of aggression, or interfere in the affairs of the Government;

(*iv*) The Nawab's officers should not obstruct the Company's business, or oppress the people employed in it;

[64] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 13. Vansittart's Narrative, II, p. 87.

[65] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, Nos. 332 and 342. Vansittart's Narrative, II, p. 85.

[66] Letter from Mr. Hastings to the Governor, May 18, 1762 (*vide* Gleig's Memoir, I, pp. 117—120) and Narrative, II, p. 90.

(*v*) No office should be bestowed on the Company's 'gumashtahs' in the Nawab's Government.[67]

The evasion of duties by some merchants, of which the Nawab complained in manifestly exaggerated terms was really due not so much to the connivance of the Company's servants as to the following reasons which have generally been overlooked:—

(*i*) The 'daroghahs' of the 'chaukis' were mostly inefficient, and rarely possessed the capacity to distinguish a genuine 'dastak' from a counterfeit one;

(*ii*) They generally did nct stop a boat with English colours, hence the abuse of the English flag must have been frequent. Their own carelessness and negligence were certainly an incentive to fraud; and

(*iii*) Corruption among them was also to some extent responsible for the evasion of duties.[68]

As regards the alleged interference of the 'gumashtahs' in the affairs of the government, the Governor himself had taken a strong attitude, and had asked the Nawab to report to him all cases of misconduct on their part that he might properly punish them.[69] He further issued orders for the

[67] The Council also resolved that a Company's servant should not hold office, or rent districts under the Nawab's government (*vide* Beng. Pub. Cons., June 7, 1762).

[68] Beng. Pub. Cons., June 28, 1762.

[69] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 65, p. 39.

punishment of such among the 'gumashtahs' as impeded the business of the 'Sarkar.'[70] But, what usually is lost sight of is the fact that the Nawab's people did on numerous occasions obstruct them[71] in their work, and by their own high-handedness caused a good deal of unpleasantness.[72] New 'chaukis' began to be established where there were none before, and English boats were sometimes needlessly stopped.[73] The faujdars were really encouraged by the Nawab's open disagreement with the English officials. An instance of their insolent behaviour may be cited. A European merchant was alleged to have stolen some salt, put in irons, and flogged like an ordinary thief under the orders of a faujdar.[74] It is curious that while Ellis's action against Antoine has been generally emphasized, such treatment meted out to an Englishman has not attracted any notice. It is inconceivable that a European could have been punished in that manner, had it not been for the fact that the Nawab's jealousy of the English merchants was well known to his subordinates.

The Nawab's objection to the practice of sending sepoys to protect English trade is easy to understand. He regarded it as an insult to his authority, and so vehemently disapproved of the use of military force by the chiefs of

[70] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 85, p. 48.

[71] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 141, p. 75.

[72] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 429, p. 217.

[73] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 432, p. 218.

[74] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 97, p. 53.

the factories. The Council, however, rightly argued[75] that, if the use of sepoys was absolutely forbidden, the Company's trade might be affected, and that there would exist no check on the rapacity of the chaukidars.

An instance[76] may be cited from the Bengal Public Consultations of June 14, 1762. A number of boats carrying salt which belonged to Ellis were recently stopped at Monghyr, and the 'bahrdars' imprisoned, although there was a 'dastak.' While they were under detention, two of the boats were sunk accidentally, and consequently Ellis was obliged to send sepoys on this occasion and write to Rajballabh a letter of protest, part of which may be reproduced:—"Before the news was brought me that Shujan Singh, Naib of Gurgin Khan in Monghyr had stopped a fleet of mine, and imprisoned the Bhirdar; yet I waited till now considering who it could be that has power to take such a measure. At present, it is fully proved that that man is capable of anything, for to-day I have received news that he has stopped another fleet also which was coming from Calcutta, and imprisoned its Bhirdar, and that by reason of detaining it two boats full of goods were sunk in the ghauts of Monghyr. You yourself will do me justice,

[75] Beng. Pub. Cons., June 21, 1762. "As regards forbidding generally and absolutely the Chiefs or the subordinates from making use of their sepoys on any occasion, we think it would be too dangerous a point to give up, for it might affect the freedom and security of the Company's trade, and occasion the dastak to be little respected. If the government chaukidars knew that no measures could be taken on the goods being stopped even when with a 'dastak,' unless orders arrived from Calcutta, they would not scruple to make off with part of the goods. Hence, when goods with 'dastaks' were stopped the Chief and Council of the nearest settlement must send sepoys for their release.

[76] Beng. Pub. Cons., June 14, 1762.

and take notice what was his reason for stopping my property, or if that cannot be done by you, write to other gentlemen who may have power over him, otherwise I swear that whoever has, or shall behave improperly to me, I myself will punish him according to his deserts." The Nawab made the usual complaint against Ellis in this matter too, but the Council did not disapprove of the latter's action.[77]

The regulations proposed by Mr. Hastings, on behalf of the Governor, while they could never be acceptable to the Council for cogent reasons, failed to satisfy the Nawab also. The latter obviously wanted something more tangible. He was extremely eager for a written agreement from the Council itself, which would specify in clear terms the exact privileges of the Company, and the extent of his own authority.[78] The Nawab wanted not only to be sure of his own ground, but sought to compel the Council to bargain with him in regard to private inland trade. This object of the Nawab has generally been ignored. It is undoubtedly a typical instance of his astute diplomacy. But, Mr. Hastings had no authority to negotiate with him on behalf of the Council, and so his talks with the Nawab in this connexion produced no results. A satisfactory settlement of the question was thus postponed.

It was brought to the notice[79] of the Council at this time that under the Nawab's orders, his mother-in-law, the

[77] Beng. Pub. Cons., June 21, 1762.

[78] Letter from Mr. Hastings to the Governor, May 18, 1762 (*vide* Gleig's Memoir, I, p. 120).

Vansittart's Narrative, II, p. 95.

[79] Beng. Pub. Cons., May 24, 1762 (*vide* Letter from Mr. Batson, dated May 21, 1762). Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 92, p. 51.

'Begam' of Mir Jafar, and Mir Daud who was to have married the daughter of Miran had been placed under confinement. This the Council rightly described as a highly "disagreeable proceeding." Mr. Hastings was directed to inquire into the matter, and advocate the cause of the 'Begam.' As a matter of fact, this affair is one more glaring illustration of the Nawab's inhuman cruelty. It was on mere suspicion that he thus ill-treated a venerable lady, the wife of his predecessor. Mr. Hastings reported to the Governor the reasons given by the Nawab for keeping the Begam, and Mir Daud under a close surveillance.[80] The lady had been alleged to have murdered one of her women by administering poison, hence the Nawab issued prompt orders for keeping strict watch over her movements, "to prevent the like accident in future." It is strange that he should have hastened to subject the lady to such humiliation without caring to make a proper investigation. As for Mir Daud, Mr. Hastings wrote,[81] "It having been represented to him (*i.e.*, the Nawab) that he (*i.e.*, Mir Daud) has constant access to the Nabob's zenana, who to preserve the honour of his family has ordered Meer Daood to remove to Dacca, or quit the province, meaning only to deprive him of those opportunities." This interesting explanation is not convincing, especially because the Nawab did not allow the young man to leave the province, and kept him confined at Patna,[82] after the latter's futile attempt to escape with

[80] Beng. Pub. Cons., June 22, 1762.

[81] *Ibid.* (an extract from Mr. Hastings' letter is given above).

[82] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 326).

the help of Mr. Batson,[83] Chief of the factory at Cossimbazar. The latter had, on his own authority, granted protection[84] both to the Begam, and to Mir Daud, but his interference in the Nawab's personal affairs was censured by the Council.[85] The real explanation of the Nawab's vindictive measures against Mir Daud seems to be his characteristic suspicion of the latter who, on account of his close connexion with the family of Mir Jafar, might prove to be a potential danger to his Government.

The mission of Mr. Hastings to the Nawab produced no satisfactory results, and ended practically in nothing.[86]

[83] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 105, p. 57. He wrote on June 25 saying that his life was in danger! (*vide* Beng. Pub. Cons., June 28, 1762).

[84] Beng. Pub. Cons., July 5, 1762.

[85] Beng. Pub. Cons., July 8, 1762.

[86] The Nawab also formally refused to pay the sum of Rs. 20 lakhs that Mr. Hastings had been directed to demand from him on behalf of the Council on the ground that he had fulfilled all the terms of the treaty subsisting between himself and the Company. (*Vide* Beng. Pub. Cons., June 14, 1762). The Nawab wrote to the Council, "That you, gentlemen, should unreasonably demand twenty lakhs of rupees of me surprises me greatly . . . Now most of the gentlemen, to whom I made the offer, have left the country; and as to the one or two who still remain here, I do not think that they will demand it of me." The air of innocence that the Nawab assumed is truly amusing! How could he betray the friends of Mr. Vansittart, to whom he had already paid the promised donations? (*Vide* Sumner's evidence, First Report, 1772, pp. 163-4 for proof of the fact that these payments had been made in 1761).

It is interesting to note that the Directors had heartily appreciated the Nawab's refusal to pay the sum of twenty lakhs. They wrote, "We rejoice at the just and spirited refusal he gave to that unwarrantable demand." (*Vide* General Letter from the Court, May 13, 1763).

A reconciliation between the Nawab, and Ellis could not be effected, and the Nawab's complaints against the trade of the Company's servants became all the more vehement and loud.

CHAPTER VIII

MIR QASIM AT MONGHYR

After settling the affairs of the border districts of Bihar, Mir Qasim proceeded to Monghyr which he had in the meantime decided to make the permanent headquarters of his government. On his way back to Patna, he removed Raja Rajballabh from his office of the Naib of Bihar, placed him under arrest[1] in his own camp, and appointed Raja Naubat Rai in his place. A really satisfactory explanation of this is not available. The principal charge against Rajballabh was that he was defaulting[2] in forty lakhs of rupees. This is why the Nawab ostensibly punished him in such a signal manner. The latter had been in office since the dismissal of Ramnarayan, and had to all appearances worked so far quite satisfactorily. In fact, the Governor in his letter to the Nawab, dated July 29, 1762, fully testified[3] to the good character of the late Naib, and particularly requested him not to dishonour the latter. The Nawab, however, absolutely disregarded the mild remonstrance of Mr. Vansittart, and meted out to the Naib an exemplary punishment which appeared to be certainly of a vindictive character. The author of the Muzaffar-namah gives an account of the horrible tortures to which Rajballabh was

[1] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS.), p. 329, also Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 711).

[2] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 14.

[3] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 118, p. 62.

subjected.[4] For instance, thorns were forcibly thrust into his nails so that he might make a confession of the amount of his total wealth. As a matter of fact, Rajballabh was deprived of everything he had, and as such he shared the fate of his predecessor whom he had supplanted. Reliable persons were deputed to Dacca to confiscate all his property,[5] and a trusted officer, Aqa Raza, was appointed specially for the purpose of superintending the forfeiture of the entire property of the late Naib.[6] It is sufficiently clear that the Nawab would not have avenged himself on the latter in the above manner for minor reasons only. Rajballabh's past connection with Miran, the late 'Chota Nawab,' was a standing cause for suspicion. He had been appointed in the place of Ramnarayan, simply because he was expected to check the accounts of his rival with special zeal and promptness. The Nawab had aimed at utilising his undoubted abilities and great experience in order to restore order in the disordered finances of Bihar, and now that a satisfactory settlement was made there remained no special necessity for continuing his appointment. Besides, the ex-Naib had certainly given offence to the Nawab for having been alleged to have written on behalf of Ellis to the 'Qalahdar' of Monghyr in regard to the European deserters who were reported to have been in hiding at Monghyr fort.[7]

[4] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS.), p. 333. It is noteworthy, however, that no other chronicle gives these details.

[5] Siyar, p. 711.

[6] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS.), p. 332.

[7] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 45, p. 29; Vansittart's Narrative, I, p. 308; II, p. 9, and Letter from the Nawab to the Governor, dated March 26, 1762.

May it not be the explanation of the Nawab's unusual persecution of Rajballabh? In addition, the latter was reputed to be extremely wealthy, and he was one among many others who fell victims to the Nawab's rapacity and oppression on account of their hoarded wealth.

While encamping at Patna the Nawab gave an unmistakable proof of his hatred for Ellis by indignantly refusing to see the latter. His attitude was manifestly so offensive to Ellis that he took it as a personal insult. He had sent on 22nd June, 1762, a 'chobdar' to the Nawab asking for the permission[8] of an interview, but not only was the permission refused, even the 'chobdar' was not admitted to the Nawab's presence. The Nawab's peevish attitude can in no way be held justifiable, and it only inflamed their mutual distrust and animosity. Ellis had certainly done the right thing by proposing a visit to the Nawab, and by doing so had shown a conciliatory attitude, but the Nawab unwisely treated the advance with open contempt, and thus lost a chance of winning the good will of the Chief. Mr. Hastings in his letter to the Governor, dated the 24th of June, communicated the Nawab's reasons for refusing the interview sought by Ellis.[9] The Nawab had represented to Mr. Hastings that "he could not put on so much dissimulation as to receive him (Ellis) with kindness, and besides he feared their conversation might turn upon their grievances, and end in a quarrel, and to avoid the indignity which such an event would occasion to him he judged it the

[8] Beng. Pub. Cons., July 5, 1762 (*vide* Letter from Ellis, dated June 23, 1762).

[9] Beng. Pub. Cons., July 5 (*vide* Letter from Mr. Hastings, dated June 24, 1762).

most prudent method not to see him at all." In short, the Nawab explained his attitude on the ground that an interview with Ellis would have resulted in a quarrel! The latter had intended just to pay the respect due from his station to the Nawab, and it is hardly conceivable that there could have been a quarrel during a ceremonial interview. Ellis was perfectly right when he wrote[10] to the Governor and Council, ". . . . I did not think he would have refused an interview which, instead of occasioning a quarrel, as he absurdly observes, might perhaps have laid the foundation of a future good understanding." The Council rightly came to the conclusion that the Nawab should not have made public his private disagreement with Ellis in the interests of his own reputation, and that of the Company.[11]

Not satisfied with personally refusing the visit of Ellis, the Nawab went to the length of forbidding the new Naib, Naubat Rai, to pay the usual complimentary visit after his appointment to Ellis.[12] Unaware of its reason, the latter considered the failure of Naubat Rai to visit him as one more deliberate insult. As a matter of fact, the Nawab wanted to establish a precedent in the matter. He would not allow his Naib to pay the first visit to the Chief, as the former represented him, and as such, he thought, his Naib held a higher status than that of a Chief of the Company's Factory. The Nawab represented to the Governor that Ellis should first pay a visit to his Naib, but on being

[10] Letter from Ellis, dated July 23, 1762.
Vansittart's Narrative, II, p. 77.

[11] Beng. Pub. Cons., July 8, 1762.

[12] *Ibid.* (*vide* Letter from Ellis, dated June 25, 1762).

pressed by Mr. Vansittart, he allowed Naubat Rai to pay the first visit to Ellis as a special case, making it clear that this should not be taken as a precedent for the future.[13] The Council, however, readily yielded on this point, and resolved,[14] "that at Patna, Cossimbazar, and Dacca the Chief of our factory shall pay the first visit to the Naib Subah who, as representative of the Nawab in his particular district, is entitled to this preference, but we expect that the Naib shall receive the Chief in the Killah with all due respect and formality, and that he shall return the visit." The Governor duly informed the Nawab of this decision,[15] but made this clear to him that if a faujdar, a tahsildar, or a zemindar had any business with the Chief, they should certainly go to the latter. Ellis resented this decision of the Council, and objected that it would be derogatory to the dignity and honour of the Chiefs, if they were to pay the first visit to the Naib Subah, and that this innovation upon former practice would give ample opportunity to the Subah to look down upon them as mere 'gumashtahs.'[16] His objections were, however, disregarded by the Governor who wrote a long minute strongly criticising the Chief for having presumed to have claimed an equal status with the Naib Subah.[17]

Towards the end of June, 1762, the Nawab reached Monghyr,[18] and made his entry into the fort with great pomp

[13] Beng. Pub. Cons., July 19, 1762.
[14] Beng. Pub. Cons., July 19, 1762.
[15] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 122, p. 64.
[16] Letter from Ellis, dated Aug. 3, 1762.
[17] Beng. Pub. Cons., Aug. 16, 1762.
[18] Vansittart's Narrative, II, p. 97.

and éclat.[19] Mr. Vansittart had thought that the Nawab would stay there during the rains only,[20] but the latter soon showed his intention to prolong his stay, and make the place his permanent capital. As this has been generally commented upon as a significant move on the part of the Nawab to remain purposely at a considerable distance from Calcutta, it deserves a close examination. The Nawab's own avowed objects were as follows:—

(*i*) As the affairs of Bhojpur and other border districts of Bihar had not yet been fully settled, and as the activities of the exiled zemindars had to be watched, the Nawab considered his presence near those parts essential. The Governor also approved of his remaining at Monghyr for this special reason.[21]

(*ii*) The province of Bihar had been distracted so far owing to the continued military operations, and its administration needed a thorough rehabilitation. The Nawab complained[22] that his hold over the province had so far been only nominal, and he, therefore, wanted to introduce peace and order, and

[19] This took place on the 15th of Zilhijj, Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 778). Siyar (p. 711).

[20] Vansittart's Narrative, II, p. 97.

[21] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 99, p. 54.

[22] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, pp. 9-10.

satisfactory government in order to establish his authority over this troublous country.

(*iii*) The Nawab further appeared to think[23] that Shuja-ud-daulah, the Wazir of Oudh, coveted the province of Bihar, and might create disturbances, hence he believed it to be prudent to remain in Bihar in order to guard against any possible interference.

(*iv*) Mr. Vansittart also apparently encouraged the Nawab to settle the affairs of Bihar, and asked him not to be[24] under any apprehensions in regard to Bengal. Thus, relieved of his anxiety for the safety of Bengal, the Nawab could easily transfer his residence to Bihar.

There is no doubt that the above reasons are quite plausible, and are sufficient to explain away the sudden change of the capital, but they are certainly neither very convincing, nor adequate. The Nawab had personally supervised for a few months the regulation of the border districts and the subjugation of the rebellious zemindars, had appointed his own men in different parganahs to collect the revenue and guard the entrances into Bengal, and had stationed sufficient troops all over the frontier, besides coming to a private understanding with the Wazir in regard to the runaway zemindars. Thus there existed no more any urgent necessity for staying at Monghyr. If this had been his principal object, he could very well have continued

[23] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 15.
[24] Abs., P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 24.

his stay at Sasseram, or Rohtasgarh. So far as the province itself was concerned, sufficient order had been introduced by now, and most of the old officials had been substituted by his own men who could surely be trusted to maintain the Nawab's authority in the country. It is certainly not a fact that a general supervision or control over them could not have been exercised from Murshidabad, although it must be admitted that Monghyr would be a more centrally situated capital for the Subah of Bengal and Bihar than Murshidabad. The Nawab's apprehension of a sudden invasion of Bihar by the Wazir was more imaginary than real, especially when it is known that there existed some secret agreement with the latter. If the need of frontier defence had been the determining factor, the Nawab should really have stayed at Murshidabad in order to ward off the threatened attack of the Marathas under Sheo Bhat.[25] In fact, it was more than once apprehended that the Marathas would invade Bengal by the way of Visnupur, or Birbhum[26], and the Governor had repeatedly requested the Nawab to sanction[27] an armed expedition to Cuttack, but in vain. The Nawab was simply indifferent to this matter, and appeared to be inclined to placate the Marathas by paying them the arrears of the Chauth, but the Council advised[28] him not to pay the Chauth, and pressed him to undertake an expedi-

[25] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, 45. Sheo Bhat threatened to invade Bengal, if the Chauth was withheld any longer.

[26] Beng. Pub. Cons., May 8, 1761; Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 404.

[27] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, Nos. 425-6; Trans., P.L.I., 1762, Nos. 3, 6, and 34.

[28] Beng. Pub. Cons., Jan. 16, 1762; Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 42, p. 27.

tion against Cuttack, and thus strengthen the South-Western frontier of Bengal, which was open to the inroads of the Marathas. The Nawab gave evasive replies, and did not realise the necessity and utility of annexing Cuttack, hence the Council had to abandon the scheme.[29] The Nawab was, however, aware of the fact[30] that the entrance into Bengal from the South-Western side was not properly safeguarded, still it is strange that he paid no attention to it. It is, therefore, clear that the Nawab was not primarily actuated by the desire to guard against an attack of Bihar, when he chose to settle at Monghyr, because the danger from the Wazir was obviously less serious than the menace of the Marathas to Bengal. In shelving the proposed Cuttack expedition, the Nawab showed an utter lack of a grasp of the problems of frontier defence. Lastly, that Mr. Vansittart did not object to the Nawab's stay at Monghyr does not mean much. The Governor had made this his settled policy not to meddle with the personal predilections of the Nawab, and so he could not have dissuaded the latter from removing his residence in consonance with his policy of nonintervention.

The transference of the headquarters from Murshidabad to Monghyr appears to have been due to deeper reasons.[31] In the first place, the Nawab required a strongly fortified place for his permanent residence, and Murshida-

[29] Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 18, 1762.

[30] Beng. Pub. Cons., Jan. 16, 1762 (*vide* Letter from the Nawab, Dec. 25, 1761).

[31] According to Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS.), p. 328, the Nawab was unwilling to go to Murshidabad on account of his "rebellious character!"

bad would obviously not satisfy him. At Monghyr, he could have at his disposal a satisfactory fort which by means of the necessary improvements he could make stronger and more serviceable. He must certainly have felt the want of proper fortifications at Murshidabad, and extraordinarily cautious and suspicious as he was, he could never have regarded himself safe in the old capital. A place like Rohtasgarh would have been too near the frontier line. Monghyr or Rajmahal alone appeared to be centrally situated, and of the two, Monghyr was decidedly better both in point of its fortifications and strategic position commanding the communication between Bihar and Bengal. It should not be forgotten that the Nawab was consistently aiming at securing his position, and this fact does amply explain the sudden preference for Monghyr.

In the second place, the Nawab would be able to start with a clean slate at a new place where he would be absolutely free from the atmosphere of the old capital, its intrigues and corruption. Murshidabad had been the centre of the late Nawabs, and was still associated with their names. Mir Qasim's vanity would require some other place where he could more effectively, and with a greater sense of security inaugurate his new régime. He apparently sought to be original in all matters, and altered every aspect of the late administration—its personnel, policy, and general tone. Is it not, therefore, intelligible that the Nawab should publicly signalise this change by shifting the capital itself? In fact, this transference of the capital indicated in a manner that could not be mistaken, the Nawab's complete emancipation from the English control, and the

establishment of his undisputed sway over the Subah. That it had a spectacular side cannot be denied, hence the psychological factor should not be ignored in this connection.

In the third place, the Nawab had been led to suspect that Mir Jafar would be restored by the Company sooner or later, and the attitude of Ellis and the members of the opposition in the Council only deepened his suspicions. In the circumstances, he may have deemed it a prudent step to leave the old capital, and settle at a place remote from Calcutta, so that in case his appointment to the Subahship were to be annulled by the Company, he would have sufficient facility, either for offering resistance, or for quickly escaping to Oudh.

In the fourth place, the Nawab had been considering since his sojourn in the frontier districts of Bihar the feasibility of annexing Nepal to his dominions—a project which soon afterwards ended in a disastrous failure. He may have, therefore, decided to be as near the northern borders as possible, so that he might direct, and superintend the military operations against Nepal, and control it after its annexation.

In the fifth place, the Nawab would not feel secure so long as Ellis, who was alleged to be a centre of attraction to all those who were inimically disposed towards him, continued to remain in Bihar. The Nawab wanted to prevent the Naib at Patna from gaining a position of virtual independence as in former days with the support of the Company's servants, and he was determined to obviate the repetition of the days of Ramnarayan, when Bihar was only nominally subject to the authority of Murshidabad. This

necessitated the Nawab's presence as near Patna as possible. At Patna itself, he could not have expected peace of mind owing to his open estrangement from Ellis, hence Monghyr would be a suitable place whence he could be able not only to control his officers in Bihar, but also keep a vigilant watch over the activities of the Chief whom he looked upon as his worst enemy.

Finally, there is the usual explanation that the Nawab deliberately removed his headquarters simply to remain at a safe distance from Calcutta, so that he might be less liable to supervision and interference, and might develop an army without hindrance with a view to establish his complete independence by ultimately overthrowing the power of the English.

At Monghyr, the Nawab immediately set himself to the work of repairing the fortifications, and the existing buildings, and commenced the construction of new edifices to beautify the town.[32] No ugly buildings were to remain, and under the orders of the Nawab a large number of such buildings were demolished to be rebuilt in a style liked by the latter. It is difficult to state how far this expensive programme of building works was justifiable, but there is no doubt that it was inspired at least partly by vanity and ambition.[33] The Nawab wanted to make a pompous display of his wealth and power. The old walls of the town were improved, and new walls were erected towards the north and the south of the city for more strength and security.[34]

[32] Siyar, p. 711.

[33] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS.), p. 335.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 336.

The fort too was soon repaired and the necessary additions and alterations were made to it. Most of the artillery remaining at Murshidabad had to be brought gradually to Monghyr,[35] and new pieces of cannon were also purchased.[36] In short, the Nawab took great pains to adorn and strengthen his present capital.[37]

The new régime at Monghyr was marked by the Nawab's usual ruthlessness and terrorism. A large number of persons was ordered to be imprisoned, although they had not been charged with any definite crime. The Nawab obviously acted in accordance with his policy of removing all those officials who had been in any way connected with the previous Nawabs. In pursuance of this object, he had already either executed, or imprisoned most of the old officials on some pretext, and now he put into prison without any trial whatsoever the principal mutasaddis of the old régime, who were still at large, and confiscated their property.[38] It is needless to add that these unhappy prisoners had to endure[39] untold sufferings during their captivity, and most of them were subsequently massacred. Among those who happened to be thus committed to prison[40] were the Ray Rayan, Ummid Ray, his son Nitta Nand, Kali Parshad, Ram Kishore, Rajballabh and his

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 336.

[36] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 14. The Nawab offered in July, 1762, to purchase 100 pieces of cannon.

[37] Riyaz-us-Salatin (A.S.B. Text, p. 381).

[38] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 333).

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 330.

[40] Riyaz-us-Salatin, p. 383; Siyar, pp. 713—15; Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 330).

sons, Dulal Ray, Ramnarayan, Munshi Jagat Ray, Muhammad Masum, Shahamat Jang, Muzaffar Ali, Nazr Ali Khan, and Shah Abdullah. Not content with the confinement of the important functionaries of the old government, the Nawab seized even some of the powerful zemindars of Bengal, and had them imprisoned, lest they should defy his authority, intrigue against him with his enemies, or tyrannise over defenceless people.[41] In fact, the Nawab made it a principle of his administration to humble the big landlords of the country, whom he regarded as his potential enemies. Among the zemindars who had been condemned to imprisonment[42] were those of Dinajpur, Nuddea,[43] Kharakpur, Birbhum, Rajshahi and Buncary.

In his new capital, the Nawab took great pains to rule after the fashion of the Great Mughals, and sedulously imitated their practice, as if to revive the glories of the Mughal Court. Two days in the week, he used to sit in the hall of audience and decide cases after hearing the parties who were freely allowed to lay their grievances before him.[44] The Nawab usually consulted men conversant with law before giving his decisions, and showed his anxiety to dispense even-handed justice.[45] Ghulam Husain has paid an eloquent tribute to the Nawab's personal interest in the administration of justice,[46] and has given a picturesque

[41] Siyar, p. 712.

[42] Riyaz-us-Salatin (A.S.B. Text, p. 383), Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 330).

[43] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 15.

[44] Siyar, p. 712; Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 606).

[45] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 606).

[46] Siyar, p. 712, Kalyan Singh (Khulasat) confirms the account of Ghulam Husain.

description of the court at Monghyr. It is needless to add in this connection that the Nawab was anxious to be impartial only when his own interests were not affected. He could be atrociously unfair and tyrannical, when he had to deal with persons whom, for some reason or other, he considered dangerous to himself, and always gave vent to his innate cruelty when he awarded punishment to such people.[47] That he used to inflict inhuman punishment is illustrated by a few cases cited[48] by Ghulam Husain himself. A certain young officer in the army had chanced to offer his hospitality to the servant of one whom the Nawab kept in confinement on suspicion, and the latter therefore got very much annoyed at this, and ordered his nose to be cut off. Another official suspected to have been in correspondence with the runaway zemindars of Bhojpur was ordered to be bound to an elephant's foot, and dragged till death. Some time after his arrival at Monghyr, the Nawab lost his eldest son[49] whom he had lately kept at Murshidabad under the care of his maternal uncle, Turab Ali Khan.[50] The Nawab's wrath curiously fell upon the unfortunate physician, Asadullah Khan, who had happened to treat the prince during his illness. The physician narrowly escaped death by managing to leave the capital in the disguise of a faqir.[51] This is a striking illustration of the Nawab's arbitrary tyranny.

[47] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 330).

[48] Siyar, p. 715.

[49] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 331).

[50] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 423, p. 214.

[51] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 331). There is no mention of this incident in Siyar, or in any other chronicle.

The Nawab was not satisfied with making Monghyr merely his administrative headquarters; he wanted that the new capital should also be a centre of culture. He attracted a number of poets, authors, and pious men of note to his court by munificent liberality. Among the latter, the most honoured was, of course, the famous poet, Shah Muhammad Ali Hazin, whose works were purchased by the Nawab at a high price, and who was besides awarded a liberal pension.[52] Several lakhs of rupees were given in charity to the Sayyids, and other poor people.[53] All this was done to impress the people with his magnanimity and piety.

In short, the Nawab did all that lay in his power to glorify his new régime at Monghyr. He also applied for, and secured from the Emperor, several titles of honour, although he was not given the honour of the Wazirship of the Empire, and the appellation of Asaf Jah, which he eagerly coveted.[54] Mir Qasim was henceforth known as Nawab Ali Jah.[55]

[52] Siyar, p. 712.
[53] Siyar, p. 712.
[54] Siyar, pp. 713-14.
[55] Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 778), etc.

CHAPTER IX

MR. VANSITTART'S MISSION TO MIR QASIM, 1762

It was after removing his seat of government to Monghyr that the Nawab seriously turned his attention to the subject of the private inland trade of the Company's servants, and began making almost daily complaints[1] about the right of the latter to trade duty-free. Up till now the Nawab had not made his protests so vehemently, but his tone appears to have undergone a perceptible change after the transference of his headquarters from Murshidabad to Monghyr. In fact, he had, and—this is usually overlooked,—determined not to allow the private trade of the English merchants on any footing whatsoever. That he took definite steps to stop this trade is clear from the following facts:—

(*i*) Not long after the Nawab's arrival at Monghyr, his officers in the various districts began, ostensibly under the Nawab's orders, to stop the boats belonging to the English merchants in spite of there being 'dastaks' with them. This harassment was reported to be due to the Nawab's demand of duties even from the Company's servants. The Chief and Council at Dacca wrote in their letter, dated October 8, 1762: "At every Chokey our boats are stopped, the people insulted, and the flag used with the utmost and most gross contempt."[2] The Chief

[1] Vansittart's Narrative, II, p. 97.

[2] Beng. Pub. Cons., Oct. 18, 1762.

and Council at Chittagong similarly wrote in their letter, dated October 14, 1762, "Our business is entirely put to a stop to, by the Nabob's people, and our boats not suffered to pass the Chokeys, the zemindars demanding very considerable duties to be paid them, declaring that they have orders from Cossim Allee Cawn so to do."[3] The Chiefs and Council at Lakhipur made[4] the very same complaint in the following words: "Within these few days, every boat which we have sent out of the river has been stopped at the different Chokeys, notwithstanding they have the Chiefs' 'dustuck'." In short, such complaints were received from every district. The Faujdar of Katwa was at this time reported to have stopped 150 boats belonging to the English gentlemen, notwithstanding that these bore the Company's 'dastak'.[5] All these, therefore, clearly indicate the Nawab's settled policy to put a stop to the duty-free trade of the Company's servants.

(*ii*) Not only were the boats stopped for the exaction of duties, but all sorts of obstruction to the Company's trade came to be reported.[6] Ellis complained of the interference of the local Amil with the weavers and bleachers in their business at Jahanabad.[7] The Chiefs of Dacca, Lakhipur, and Chittagong also drew the attention of the Council at Calcutta to the unprecedented ill-treatment of their sub-

[3] Beng. Pub. Cons., Nov. 1, 1762.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, Nos. 130, 131 and 133 (p. 25 and pp. 69-70).

[6] Third Report, 1773, pp. 335-36.

[7] Beng. Pub. Cons., Oct. 18, 1762, Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 141, p. 75.

ordinates, and Mr. Vansittart formally protested against it to the Naib, and the Faujdar of Dacca more than once.[8] The Chief and Council at Dacca further represented[9] in their letter, dated October 8, 1762, ". . . Muchalcas have been taken from many inhabitants, prohibiting them on no account to have any connections with the English." This statement is borne out by the author of the Muzaffar-namah, who too states[10] that the Nawab's 'ziladars' were instructed to direct the 'ryots' not to have any dealings with the English. The Nawab must have supposed that by this means he would be able to hamper the private trade of the English, and force them ultimately to pay the regular duties.

(*iii*) The practice of the Company's servants to issue 'dastaks' indiscriminately was galling to the Nawab, and he wanted to get it abolished. Early in August, 1762, he wrote to the Governor complaining that too many people had begun issuing 'dastaks',[11] whereupon the Governor informed him,[12] on September 3, that the gentlemen who had been authorised to issue 'dastaks' were Mr. Batson of Cossimbazar, Mr. Cartier of Dacca, Mr. Billiers of Lakhipur, Mr. Verelst of Islambad, Mr. Ellis of Patna, and Mr. Gray of Malda. It was just this information which the Nawab needed, because he was bent upon putting down the

[8] Vansittart's Narrative II, p. 127, and Trans. P.L.I., 1762, Nos. 142, 144, 145, pp. 75—77.

[9] Beng. Pub. Cons., Oct. 18, 1762.

[10] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 333).

[11] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 14.

[12] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 128, p. 68.

circulation of the 'dastaks' issued by all other English merchants.[13]

(*iv*) That the Nawab suddenly multiplied the number of customs stations in the country is a significant step. They were not only to be a source of additional income to the Government, but were specially intended to be an effective impediment to the private trade of the English. New stations were established in places where there had been none before, and although the Governor had earnestly requested[14] the Nawab to close these new 'Chaukis' no heed seems to have been paid to it. Besides stationing additional 'Chaukis,' the Nawab augmented the force at every customs station so that the English boats might be systematically stopped.[15]

While the Company's servants loudly protested against this deliberate and sudden obstruction to their private trade, the Nawab made equally bitter complaints against their high-handedness, and that of their 'gumashtahs.' New charges were brought against them by the Nawab, and these may be thus summarised:—

(*i*) The Nawab wrote[16] to the Governor in May, 1762: "And this is the way your gentlemen behave; they make a disturbance all over my country, plunder the people, injure and disgrace my servants, with a resolution

[13] "A defence of Mr. Vansittart's conduct in concluding the treaty of commerce with Mhir Cossim Aly Chawn." By a servant of the Company long resident in Bengal, 1764, p. 9.

[14] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 429, p. 217.

[15] Beng. Pub. Cons., Nov. 1, 1762.

[16] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 13. Vansittart's Narrative, II, pp. 97—102.

to expose my government to contempt; and from the borders of Hindostan to Calcutta, make it their business to expose me to scorn." It is too sweeping a charge to deserve any elaborate examination, and is a characteristic instance of the Nawab's exaggerated denunciations.

(*ii*) The recent increase in the number of the Company's factories was bitterly criticised by the Nawab in the following words.[17] "Near four, or five hundred new factories have been established in my dominions, and it is impossible to express what disturbances are made in every factory, and how the inhabitants are oppressed." The addition of factories was due partly to the increasing volume of the private trade of the English, and the Governor in his letter[18] to the Nawab, dated April 23, 1762, rightly argued that commerce had lately increased owing to greater security, and that the prosperity of the country would be still further enhanced by this increasing trade. The Nawab agreed with the Governor, and replied, "It is true that by the flourishing of trade, and the free intercourse of merchants, a country is rendered populous."[19] That, in spite of this admission, he went on complaining against the increase in the number of factories was due to his innate hatred of the privileged position of the English merchants.

(*iii*) The rapacity of the Company's 'gumashtahs' was the most serious charge. There is, however, sufficient

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 65, p. 39.

[19] Narrative, II, p. 102.

evidence to prove that they did flagrantly abuse[20] the authority and protection of their inexperienced, or ignorant masters. The Nawab wrote about the 'gumashtahs,' as follows: ". . . the gumastahs who have gone into the country on the part of your gentlemen, regardless of what any one says to them, insolently use violent means to carry on their traffick, and whenever a gunge, or golah has been established, they act as zemindars, taalookdars, and renters, and leave my officers no authority; and besides this, they send other people's goods with their own, under the protection of their dustucks."[21] This allegation was substantially correct. In fact, the 'gumashtahs' were generally a set of the worst rascals whose oppressive conduct was an open scandal. Their masters usually supported them, because they believed that their agents had to commit acts of violence in self-defence on account of the opposition of the Nawab's people. Assured of sympathy and assistance, the English agents practised the worst tyranny wherever they went. They forced the ryots to sell their goods below the market rate, and purchase the commodities they had brought at an exorbitant price.[22] They forcibly exacted large presents from the people, and thus plundered them under this pretence. They sold 'dastaks' to private merchants

[20] Beng. Pub. Cons., Oct. 18, 1762 (*vide* letters from the Nawab, Hidayatullah and Muhammad Ali).

Beng. Pub. Cons., Jan. 17, 1763 (*vide* letter from Ganga Ram Mittra to Mr. Taxeira).

Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 1, 1763 (*vide* letter from Vansittart to Johnstone, Hay, Bolts, dated Dec. 15, 1762).

[21] Vansittart's Narrative, II, p. 102.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 104, and Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 1, 1763.

at a price,[23] and the latter thus freely evaded the payment of the duties. Sergeant Brego who had been sent[24] to Backergunje by the Governor to arrest the 'gumashtahs' accused of having created disturbances wrote[25] on May 25, 1762, "A gentleman sends a gomastah here to buy or sell, he immediately looks upon himself as sufficient to force every inhabitant, either to buy his goods, or sell him theirs, and on refusal a flogging, or confinement immediately ensues . . . Before, justice was given in the public cutcherree, but now every gomastah is become a judge, and every one's house a cutcherree; they even pass sentences on the zemindars themselves, and draw money from them by pretended injuries. . ." The Faujdar of Dacca wrote[26] to the Governor in September, 1762, ". . . the gomastahs of Luckypoor and Dacca factories oblige the merchants, etc., to take tobacco, cotton, iron, and sundry other things at a price exceeding that of the bazaar, and then extort the money from them by force; besides which they take diet money for the peons, and make them pay a fine for breaking their agreement. By these proceedings, the aurangs and other places are ruined. The gomastahs of Luckypoor factory have taken the taalookdars' taalooks from the tahsildar by force for their own use, and will not pay the rent. By these disturbances the country is ruined, and the reiats cannot stay in their houses, nor pay the malguzaree." The Amil of Purnea similarly complained against the 'gumashtahs,' and represented that the latter impeded the

[23] Verelst's "A view of English Government in Bengal," p. 8.
[24] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 109, p. 58.
[25] Beng. Pub. Cons., Oct. 18, 1762.
[26] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 32.

public business.[27] Mr. Hastings while on his way to Sasseram wrote to the Governor from Bhagalpur on April 25, 1762,[28] "I beg leave to lay before you a grievance which calls loudly for redress, and will, unless duly attended to, render ineffectual any endeavours to create a firm or lasting harmony between the Nawab and the Company; I mean the oppressions committed under the sanction of the English name. . . This evil, I am well assured, is not confined to our dependents alone, but is practised all over the country by people falsely assuming the habits of our sepoys, or calling themselves our gomastahs." Mr. Verelst observes,[29] "English agents, or gomastahs, not contented with injuring the people, trampled on the authority of the government, binding and punishing the Nabob's officers wherever they presumed to interfere." In short, it is clear that the insolent tyranny of the 'gumashtahs,' exaggerated though it might have been, was a fact, and it was due to a number of reasons.

In the first place, they were often obliged to have recourse to violence in defence of their privileges in those distant parts of the province where the Nawab's government had not been well established.[30] In the second place, a number of clever merchants fraudulently posed as the Company's agents in the interior of the country,[31] and carried on their nefarious activities simply under the protection

[27] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 31.

[28] Gleig's Memoir, I, p. 107.

[29] Verelst's "A view of English Government in Bengal," p. 46.

[30] Mr. Vansittart himself admits this fact (Narrative, II, p. 151).

[31] Letter from Mr. Hastings to the Governor (Narrative, II, p. 80).

of the Company's name. In the third place, the complaints made against themselves were represented by the agents to their credulous masters as a deliberate obstruction to their business, and were therefore invariably disregarded by the latter.[32] In the fourth place, they had at their disposal the armed sepoys of the factories, and thus could defy the Nawab's officials, or the subordinates of the zemindars.[33] In the fifth place, as Mr. Hastings put it, "... the indolence of the Bengalees, or the difficulty of gaining access to those who might do them justice, prevents our having knowledge of the oppressions, and encourages their continuance to the great, though unmerited scandal of our government."[34] In the sixth place, it was not unusual for a young writer to be engaged in a joint trade[35] with these crafty 'gumashtahs' who supplied the capital, and gave a share of the profits to their sleeping partners whose only duty was to issue 'dastaks.' Sure of the support of their English partners who were obviously dominated by their clever agents, the latter could safely tyrannise over the ryots, and weavers, and coerce the public servants. The Nawab complained that these 'gumashtahs' even refused to show their 'dastaks' to his officials out of sheer arrogance.[36] In the seventh place, the 'gumashtahs' had sometimes to take the law into their own hands, when the Nawab's officials who were perfectly aware of their master's animosity

[32] Beng. Pub. Cons., Oct. 18, 1762.

[33] Letter from the Faujdar of Dacca, Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 15.

[34] Gleig's Memoir, I, p. 108.

[35] "A defence of Mr. Vansittart's conduct," p. 9.

[36] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 7, p. 6.

against the English merchants maliciously obstructed them in their business. Cases of such unwarranted interference by the Nawab's officials were certainly not infrequent, and were regularly brought to the notice of the Nawab.[37]

(*iv*) Another ground of complaint against the gentlemen of the factories was their practice of giving loans to the zemindars or to the 'mutasaddis' of the Nawab. The latter strongly urged[38] the Governor to stop this practice as it impeded the work of revenue collection. The Nawab particularly criticised the attitude of the gentlemen at Dacca, who had been alleged to have obstructed the collection of revenue by sending their men to the aid of the zemindars.[39]

(*v*) The next argument against the English merchants was that they had begun to rent markets, or 'golas,' and establish new ones by force. This was true to a certain extent only, and was often due to the instigation of the 'gumashtahs.' The Nawab particularly complained against Mr. Chevalier of Dacca who was reported to have oppressed the people by forcibly establishing new markets, factories, and 'chaukis.'[40]

(*vi*) Finally, the Nawab took exception to the English merchants trading in certain articles like salt, tobacco, etc., which he referred to as a breach of the

[37] Vansittart's Narrative, II, pp. 147—50, Trans., P.L.I., 1762, Nos. 144 and 142, Beng. Pub. Cons., Oct. 18, and Nov. 1, 1762.

[38] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, pp. 14-15, and Beng. Pub. Cons., Jan. 17, 1763.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 14, and Narrative, II, p. 117.

Company's 'firman.'[41] In fact, the whole of the private trade of the Company's servants was suddenly regarded by the Nawab as an unauthorised asd illegal innovation!

At length, the disputes, arising out of the private trade of the English gentlemen, became so serious and frequent that a rupture between the Nawab and the Company seemed to be imminent. Complaints, and counter-complaints from the officers of the government, and the gentlemen of the factories fast multiplied. The only alternative to a war with the Nawab was a compromise which would be mutually acceptable, and a compromise could be reached only through a personal interview between the Nawab and Mr. Vansittart. The latter therefore decided to pay a visit to the Nawab at Monghyr, and settle the points at issue amicably. He had also been lately anxious to obtain a change of air after his recent illness,[42] and so he readily accepted the pressing invitation of the Nawab to come to Monghyr.[43] "I flattered myself," Mr. Vansittart writes,[44] "this would prove an effectual method of re-establishing a confidence between us, putting an end to the disputes, which had arisen, and providing a plan for the security of the provinces against foreign enemies." With Mr. Hastings as his assistant, he set out from Calcutta on the 20th October, and after staying for a few days at Murshidabad,

[41] Narrative, II, p. 142.

[42] Narrative, II, p. 130.

[43] The Nawab had sent his invitation early in June, but Mr. Vansittart had to postpone his departure. Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 99, p. 54.

[44] Narrative, II, p. 130.

he arrived at Monghyr on the 30th of November, 1762.[45] The Governor was accorded a magnificent reception by the Nawab who went to receive his honoured guests at the garden of Godergatta (about six miles from Monghyr), and with the utmost honour escorted them to the town, where a splendid building on the hill of Sita-kund, and a number of fine tents were set apart for their residence.[46] Then followed ceremonial visits, and grand entertainments almost every day. The Nawab offered costly presents to his guest who too complimented the former with some rich presents that he had brought with him.[47] The festivities organised in honour of the guest were on a sumptuous scale, and Mr. Vansittart and his party were treated " with all the usual marks of respect and friendship." The principal topic of conversation was the Nawab's complaints against the alleged ill-treatment that he had received from Mr. Ellis and others. The Nawab next complained of the abuses of the private trade of the English gentlemen.'[49]

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 144.

"Thursday of Zamadiul Awwal 1176" according to Siyar, (Lucknow Text, p. 715). " Fifth of Zamadiul Awwal according to Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 606).

[46] Siyar, p. 716.

[47] *Ibid.*

[48] *Ibid.* and Narrative, II, p. 141.

[49] Narrative, II, pp. 142—144; Siyar, p. 716; Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 607), Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 336); Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 780); Vansittart's "Letter to the Proprietors of East India Stock," p. 80, Verelst's " A view of English Government in Bengal," p. 37.

The points specially stressed by him were as follows:—

(1) The private trade of the Company's servants was not covered by the 'Firmans' of the Company;

(2) His administration was adversely affected by this trade owing to difficulty in maintaining law and order in the country;

(3) He was suffering a heavy loss in his custom duties; ...

(4) Under the protection of the Company's name, innumerable persons passed their goods duty-free;

(5) The prestige of his government suffered on account of the irregularities of this trade;

(6) The Company's 'gumashtahs,' and servants oppressed the people; and

(7) The gentlemen of the factories held farms, 'taaluqs,' 'ganj's, and 'golas,' borrowed from and lent to his people, afforded protection to his dependents; coined money at different places, and used force in the purchase and sale of goods.

Mr. Vansittart's position was very delicate. He did not like to offend his friend, and he had avowedly come to bring about a compromise. The Nawab, however, demanded the total abolition of the private trade of the English gentlemen, but this the Governor had no authority to assent

to without the concurrence of the Council.[50] "Although I was of the same opinion," Mr. Vansittart writes,[51] "with the Nawab as to the rights of the 'firman,' that they could not be construed to extend further than the trade in articles imported by shipping and the manufactures and products of the country for exportation, yet I was unwilling to give up an advantage which had been enjoyed by the Company's servants in a greater, or less degree for five, or six years; and therefore told the Nawab that as to the inland trade, or the trade from place to place in the country, in the articles of the produce of the country we meant only to carry it on upon the same footing with other merchants." Obviously the Governor played into the hands of the Nawab in yielding on the point of the duties, and agreeing to surrender the right of the Company's servants to trade duty-free. That he wanted to placate the stubborn Nawab is easy to understand,[52] and the reasons why he thought himself justified[53] in acquiescing in the settlement regarding the payment of duties can be gleaned from his "Narrative":—

1. "We agree with the Nawab in opinion that the true intent and natural meaning of the 'firman' granted to the Company was to give to them, and their servants a free trade, clear of all customs, in all articles of commerce, to be imported, or exported by shipping";[54]

[50] Narrative, II, p. 143.

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] Letter from Vansittart to Council, Dec. 15, 1762. (Third Report, 1773, app. 32, pp. 340-41).

[53] "A Defence of Mr. Vansittart's Conduct," p. 151.

[54] Narrative, II, p. 151.

2. "It is a fact that the Nabobs of these provinces did formerly restrain the Europeans[55] from carrying on this trade upon any footing. . ."

3. "We think it would be unreasonable to desire to carry on the inland trade upon any other footing than that of the merchants of the country . . ."[56]

4. ". . . I thought I was doing a great service to the English merchants by establishing a right to a trade which had always before been disputed . . ."[57]

5. ". . . I agreed with the Nabob that the rate of duties should be nine per cent on the prime cost . . . I found this to be below the rate already paid at Luckypoor . . ."[58]

Mr. Vansittart went to the length of agreeing[59] to all the other proposals of the Nawab:—

(*i*) The Chiefs of the factories should be instructed not to oppress the ryots, and protect his dependents;

(*ii*) The Faujdars should be permitted to try any offending 'gumashtahs';

(*iii*) The Chiefs of Chittagong and Lakhipur must not work the salt-pans themselves;

(*iv*) The Chiefs and 'gumashtahs' of the factories should not rent, or purchase any lands, nor

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 153.

[56] Narrative, II, p. 159.

[57] Narrative, II, p. 162.

[58] Narrative, II, p. 163.

[59] Beng. Pub. Cons., Jan. 17, 1762; Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept. No. 1, pp. 1—3.
Vide also the Governor's minute embodied in the Pub. Dept. Proceedings, dated Feb. 1, 1763.

lend to and borrow from the zemindars, and officers of the government;

(*v*) The Chiefs and 'gumashtahs' should not obstruct the 'dallals' and weavers of the government;

(*vi*) The bullion of the English gentlemen and 'gumashtahs' should not be coined in the Patna, the Murshidabad, and the Dacca mints, and payment of the usual 'battah' according to the market rate should be made to the money-changers; and

(*vii*) The 'gumashtahs' at Gwalparah should not deal directly with the hillmen, and must make all their purchases and sales through 'daroghah' of the 'Sarkar.'

In due course, Mr. Vansittart proposed[60] a number of regulations for settling the manner of carrying on the inland trade upon a satisfactory footing, and these were accepted by the Nawab after a show of reluctance. These regulations can be thus summed up:—

(*i*) Only the export or import trade of the Company shall be duty-free.

(*ii*) For the inland trade, the Company's 'dastak' shall not be granted.

[60] Narrative, II, pp. 155—159; Trans., P.L.I., 1762-3, No. 4, p. 9.

Beng. Pub. Cons., Dec. 27, 1762.

" " " Jan. 20, 1763.

(*iii*) Duties should be paid according to the fixed rate on all goods meant for the inland trade.

(*iv*) Duties shall be paid only once before the despatch of goods.

(*v*) These goods shall not be detained after the 'dastak' has been examined by the 'Chaukidars.'

(*vi*) Notice shall be given to the nearest English factory as well as to the nearest officer of the government in case one attempts to pass goods without a 'dastak,' or fraudulently use the Company's 'dastak,' and the goods shall be confiscated.

(*vii*) If anybody attempts to pass goods without 'dastak,' under the care of other boats having a 'dastak,' it shall be seized.

(*viii*) The 'gumashtahs' shall not use force in buying or selling, and shall bring all their complaints to the Faujdars instead of taking the law into their own hands.

(*ix*) The Faujdars shall transmit to the Nawab copies of their proceedings, and the Governor shall be free to apply to the Nawab for redress in case any Faujdar is found guilty of partiality, or oppression.

Mr. Vansittart's attempt to regulate the inland trade according to the above plan was certainly well-meaning and logical, but his policy is open to grave objections. Firstly, he showed great imprudence in divulging his plan to the Nawab before discussing it in the Council. It is strange

that he did not anticipate the natural opposition of his colleagues against his proposals. Secondly, he was mistaken[61] in believing that he had been fully authorised to make even fundamental changes on behalf of the Council. Thirdly, he should not have assured the Nawab that the proposed regulations would certainly be established. The promise[62] made by him to the Nawab was both hasty and tactless. Fourthly, he unwisely acquiesced in the Nawab's desire to control the 'gumashtahs' and other subordinates of the Company through his Faujdars. He should have realised that it was too dangerous a concession to be tolerated by his colleagues. Fifthly, he was unjustified in yielding to the Nawab's objections in regard to the coinage of the Company's 'sikkahs' at the different mints, the manufacture of salt, the holding of markets, the purchase of lands, the trade in Assam, and such other vital matters without insisting on a thorough investigation, and consultation with the gentlemen concerned.[63] Sixthly, he did not satisfactorily settle how the Company's trade could be distinguished from that of its servants. Undue interference of the Nawab's officers in the Company's trade was henceforth not unlikely.[64] Finally,

[61] Beng. Pub. Cons., Nov. 15, 1762. The Council in their letter to the Governor may be said to have only vaguely requested him to settle "these matters upon a solid plan."

[62] Narrative, II, p. 163; Siyar, p. 716; Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, p. 780 (MS.).

[63] Beng. Pub. Cons., Jan. 17, 1763, *vide* letter from the Chief and Council of Dacca, dated Jan. 10, 1763.

[64] Interference was immediately reported from different places, and the Governor had to complain of it in his letters to the Nawab. Trans., P.L.I., 1762-3, Nos. 7—9, pp. 10—13.

he committed a serious blunder in accepting[65] a monetary gift from the Nawab. He thus courted the criticism that he had willingly sacrificed the rights of the Englishmen on receipt of a substantial bribe. As a matter of fact, the money that the Governor now received was the present promised by the Nawab before the revolution.

The Governor's visit to Monghyr is of interest from another point of view. He could observe at first hand the remarkable change in the whole spirit of the Nawab's government. Mir Qasim was a changed[66] man, and he was no longer submissive and conciliatory. His attitude was perceptibly dictatorial, and the Governor failed to perceive that the Nawab had been aiming at complete independence.[67] Mr. Vansittart was given an opportunity to witness a grand parade of the Nawab's troops, which the latter had purposely arranged to make an ostentatious exhibition of his military strength.[68] The new army organised under the command of Gurgin Khan extorted the admiration of the Governor.[69] The whole force of the Nawab at present consisted of about sixteen thousand horse, and a few battalions of Sepoys.[70] Ghulam Husain has left a vivid description of the parade, and the Governor's views regarding the troops. According

[65] Select Committee Report, 1772, I (2), App. 80; Third Report, 1773, p. 311. He had received Rs. 5,00,000 for himself, and Rs. 2,00,000 for Caillaud. (First Report, Vol. III, p. 168, Caillaud's evidence).

[66] Muzaffar-namah (MS.), p. 336.

[67] *Ibid.* and Bolts, "Considerations on Indian Affairs" p. 42.

[68] Siyar, p. 716.

[69] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 607).

[70] Narrative, II, p. 185.

to him,[71] the Governor expressed his opinion about the army in the following terms:—"I have seen your troops, and acknowledge that you have accoutred and disciplined them very well, but these are only good against Indians, and people of this climate. Beware of ever opposing them to Europeans, or of coming to a rupture with the English, upon a confidence reposed in your people; for, rest assured that you shall find yourself disappointed, and that these men will never stand the brunt of European soldiers. Beware, therefore, of trusting your honour to such hands." Kalyan Singh too has given a similar account.[72] Did Mr. Vansittart suspect that these troops might be used against the English?[73]

Before returning to Calcutta, the Governor went to Patna where he arrived on 1st January, 1763. Here he had to decide among other things two outstanding questions regarding the Burbunna gate, and the Colonelganj. The Burbunna gate in the north-west quarter of the city had been closed under the orders of the Nawab, and Ellis had long complained of it; while the Colonelgunj was a market near the English factory set up apparently without any sanction either from the Nawab, or from the Company, and it had so far been a continual source of dispute with the Nawab's government. The Governor complied with the wishes of the Nawab, agreed that the gate should remain shut up, and gave instructions for the abolition of the market. On January 4, he wrote to the Naib at Patna, "Agreeably to

[71] Siyar (English Translation, Calcutta Reprint, II, p. 44). *Vide* also Tarikh-i-Muzaffari MS., p. 779.

[72] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 607).

[73] Although the Siyar seems to suggest this, Mr. Vansittart does not say anything about it in his Narrative.

your desire, I have directed Mr. Ellis to abolish Colonel-gunge, and accordingly orders have, from this day, been given to the merchants not to bring their goods there any more . . . . as to the shutting the wicket, though there does not appear to be any great necessity for it, and the going round about will be an inconvenience to the people of the factory, nevertheless, as it is the Nabob's order, do it whenever you please, nobody will obstruct you."[74] Although, these were only minor points, yet they serve to illustrate the Governor's characteristic aquiescence in whatever the Nawab insisted upon. In yielding to the Nawab's wishes, the Governor took hardly any serious notice at all of the objections of Ellis. In fact, there was a number of cogent arguments[75] against the shutting of the gate:—

(*i*) The servants of the factory were put to needless inconvenience, and were deprived of an easy access to the city;

(*ii*) The Nawab's plea that the gate must be closed in the interest of good order in the city was hollow, and there was no reason why it should be shut up even in the daytime;

(*iii*) The gate had been kept open for more than twenty years past, and there was no immediate necessity for closing it now; besides, it was of no advantage to the Nawab himself;

[74] Trans., P.L.I., 1762-3, No. 2, p. 4.

[75] Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 17, 1763; Trans., P.L.I., 1762-3, No. 24, p. 25.

(*iv*) The Gate had been used by the people of the factory for a long time past, and it was by this way that they had easily come to the city for its assistance at the time of the Shahzadah's attack;

(*v*) The closing of the gate created a false alarm, and it was rumoured that there no longer existed any friendship between the Nawab and the Company;

(*vi*) Unless the Nawab meant to strengthen the town against the factory itself, there was no point in his safeguarding that part of the town which was closest to the factory;

(*vii*) The closing of the gate could be of no use for the security of the town against a foreign enemy;

(*viii*) The Nawab's action in closing the gate, and ordering the intrenchment by the river was due more to pique against Ellis than to any other reason; and finally,

(*ix*) The prestige of the Company had suffered owing to the shutting up of the gate, as the Nawab's action seemed to be clearly indicative of his distrust of the English.

The market too being close to the factory had been very useful to its people, and its abolition would cause real difficulty in the regular and cheap supply of provisions[76]

[76] Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 18, 1763.

The Governor, therefore, requested the Naib to allow Ellis to build some 'golas' for storing 20,000 maunds of grain for the use of the factory.[77] The Naib was, however, subsequently reported to have stopped all boats going to, and coming from Colonelganj under the instructions of the Nawab, and the Governor had to protest against this.[78] Ellis further complained, "The encouragement given to Nobit Roy on this occasion has induced him to seize, and carry away by force all the dealers of this gunge, to detain boats loaded with our own particular property having 'dustucks,' and to send the Chief word that he will not suffer a further importation of grain. He has likewise publicly punished those boatmen who have been long employed in this service, and made proclamations through the city that whoever brings grain to the English shall be treated in the same manner . . . ."[79] As this was a grave charge, a strong letter was written to the Nawab on the subject.[80] The latter in his reply ridiculed the charge, and rejected it as a malicious lie concocted by Ellis.[81] On the whole, it was tactless on the part of the Governor, when he readily complied with the desire of the Nawab in the matter of the gate and the market. The hostile majority in the Council forced him,[82] subsequently to write to the Nawab asking him to order the opening of the gate, although the decision

[77] Trans., P.L.I., 1762-3, No. 2.

[78] *Ibid.*, No. 14.

[79] Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 18, 1763.

[80] Trans., P.L.R., 1762-3, No. 25.

[81] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 13, p. 12.

[82] Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 19, 1763.

in regard to the market was unanimously approved.[83] The Nawab was ultimately obliged to direct the gate and the intrenchment at Patna to be opened.[84]

The Governor left Patna on January 5, and stopped at Monghyr for a day to see the Nawab, and left Monghyr on the 9th for Calcutta.[85] His mission to Monghyr had been actuated by good intentions, but he failed to arrive at a satisfactory settlement of the points at issue. By imprudently proposing the ill-fated regulations, and thus arousing the wrath of his colleagues whom he had not previously consulted,[86] he only hastened the inevitable rupture with the Nawab.

[83] Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 19, 1763.

[84] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 19, p. 19.

[85] Narrative, p. 184, and p. 187.

[86] *Vide* letter from Carnac to Clive, dated Feb. 26, 1763 (Malcolm's Life of Clive, II, p. 283). Carnac wrote, "These concessions are so evidently shameful and disadvantageous to us that it is not to be conceived they could ever have been submitted to, except by persons who were brought into them. . . ."

CHAPTER X

MIR QASIM'S EXPEDITION AGAINST NEPAL

Early in January, 1763, the Nawab proceeded on an expedition against Nepal. He set out with a grand army led by his Commander-in-Chief, Gurgin Khan, almost immediately after the departure[1] of Mr. Vansittart from Monghyr. This expedition deserves more than a passing mention, as it admirably serves to illustrate the Nawab's innate cupidity and ambition. That he should have planned and attempted the conquest of a hilly country like Nepal with an ill-equipped and newly recruited force shows not only an utter lack of foresight, but the absence of even ordinary commonsense and prudence. It is indeed strange that the Nawab should have turned his attention to foreign conquest at a time when his own dominions needed settlement and consolidation. He had, however, been led to believe that the reduction of Nepal would be an easy task,[2] and so he thoughtlessly undertook the venture in a most optimistic mood. Little had he calculated the peculiar difficulties that his army would have to face in an unknown mountainous country!

It was Gurgin Khan who had been principally responsible for the initiation[3] of the project, and the Nawab readily approved of it to gratify his own greed and ambition. A number of circumstances appeared to be favourable to

[1] Vansittart's Narrative, II, p. 184. Mr. Vansittart left Monghyr on Jan. 9, 1763.

[2] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 717).

[3] *Ibid.*, and Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 781).

the proposed expedition. In the first place, the Nawab had recently[4] reorganised and remodelled his forces according to the European fashion, and its efficiency and strength were reported to the Nawab in exaggerated terms. The new army had to be put to the test before the Nawab could consider himself secure against the English, and Gurgin Khan, therefore, urged the Nawab to undertake the expedition with a view to make a trial[5] of the army he had lately disciplined, and of the artillery he had so efficiently created and trained. In fact the Nawab too seems to have been extremely anxious to test the strength of his army. Had this not been a fact, he could surely have asked for the assistance of the Company's forces. That he deliberately rejected[6] the counsel of his close friends like Ali Ibrahim Khan who had rightly asked him to drop the idea of the expedition, or undertake the venture with the help of the English, is extremely significant and points to the Nawab's intention of relying on his own troops, and giving it a fair trial. In the second place, the fortress of Bettia had only been recently taken,[7] and the district of Champaran still awaited a thorough subjugation.[8] A force would have to be sent there sooner or later for establishing order and peace. Could it not be both convenient and easy to utilise this opportunity for annexing the neighbouring kingdom of Nepal? In the third place, there was in the Nawab's

[4] Vansittart's Narrative, II, p. 185.

[5] Siyar, p. 717.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] Abs., P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 13. The Nawab's troops took the fort in March, 1762.

[8] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 608).

service a number of people from the hills and, possessed as they were of a first-hand knowledge of their country, they constantly offered their services as guides[9] in an expedition to Nepal, and their encouragement was a decisive factor in the end. In the fourth place Gurgin Khan had collected a good deal of information about the Himalayan countries from the hordes of mendicants who annually visited[10] those parts, and from the Kashmiris and Armenians who traded in Tibet. Finally, the affairs in Nepal were at this time in a troublous condition, and invited interference. The country was passing through a critical period of her chequered history. Ranjit Mall, the last Newar ruler of the country, was vainly trying[11] to stem the tide of Gurkha invasion led by Prithwi Narayan, the daring Gurkha Chief, who was fast subjugating the valley of Nepal. In short, the country was in the throes of a revolution, and in a state of complete confusion and anarchy. This seemed to be a tempting opportunity for fishing in the troubled waters of that country, and anticipating its inevitable conquest by the Gurkhas.

What influenced the Nawab most in his ultimate decision was the alluring report that Nepal was an exceedingly wealthy country abounding in gold and other valuable commodities. The prospect of easily acquiring the fabulous wealth of Nepal fired the imagination of both Gurgin Khan and his master, and the conquest of such a country held out temptations that the latter could hardly have resisted. As

[9] Siyar, p. 717.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] An Account of the Kingdom of Nepaul, by Kirkpatrick, p. 268.

a matter of fact, the principal commodity imported into Bengal from Tibet was gold, and this fact lent colour to the popular belief that Nepal and the countries beyond abounded with gold mines.[12] According to the author of the Muzaffar-Namah,[13] the Nawab undertook the expedition, chiefly at the instigation of Raja Sukh Lal[14] among others, who authoritatively informed the former that there were gold mines in Nepal, and that these were easily accessible.

Mir Qasim could hardly have been unaware of the many other advantages that would result from the success of his project. From times immemorial, there had been a considerable trade between the province of Bihar, and the trans-Himalayan regions through Nepal, and its vicinity to the district of Champaran afforded immense facilities for the development of this trans-Frontier trade of Bihar and Bengal. If only Nepal could be annexed to Bengal, this lucrative trade would soon grow to the advantage of the Nawab's government. Besides, there was a real apprehension that the success of the Gurkhas might ruin this profitable commerce between Bengal and the Himalayan countries, and it was because of this that the annexation of Nepal by the Gurkhas was dreaded by the English who at the time of Cornwallis sent an unsuccessful expedition under Captain Kinloch to help the Newar prince.[15] There was another obvious advantage. The Nawab surely knew that

[12] Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, Alld. Univ., MS., p. 781.
Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 608). Siyar, p. 717.

[13] Muzaffar-Namah, Alld. Univ. MS., p. 334.

[14] He was the head of the Nawab's Intelligence Department (*vide* Siyar, p. 709).

[15] Kirkpatrick's Account of the Kingdom of Nepaul, p. 270.

a brilliant military campaign would considerably add to his prestige and renown. Nepal was the only part of India which the Muslim arms had never fully reached, and if the Nawab could succeed in bringing it under his rule, he would have the unique honour of carrying the banner of Islam into that country! Above all, he would be able to earn the distinction and prestige of a conqueror, and thus surpass the previous Subahdars of Bengal.

If the author of the Muzaffar-Namah is to be credited,[16] the Nawab, before setting out himself, had originally sent under a trusty officer only a small force consisting of three battalions of Tilangas to make the preliminary attack against the borders of Nepal, but the latter, however, not only failed to achieve any success, but also ultimately perished[17] in an unsuccessful attempt to scale the heights, being crushed by huge stones that were rolled down upon them by the enemy. In all about three thousand men are thus reported to have lost their lives. When the Nawab heard of this dismal event, he determined to avenge himself on the insolent Gurkhas by sending a grand army against them under Gurgin Khan himself, and personally started[18] for Bettia to direct the attack from that place.[19]

With the help of guides, Gurgin Khan and his forces reached the outskirts of the mountains of Nepal, and entered the interior of the valley of the Kurra by the end of

[16] Muzaffar-Namah, Alld. Univ. MS., p. 334.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 335.
The Siyar makes no mention of these details.

[18] On the 25th of Zamadiulsani of 1176, according to the Siyar. The Muzaffar-Namah simply mentions the month of Zamadiulsani.

[19] Siyar, p. 717. Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V., p. 608).

January, 1763.[20] The Nawab in the meanwhile remained at Bettia, and showed no inclination to go any further. This is certainly interesting, and it illustrates the Nawab's well-known timidity and lack of soldierly talents. Mr. Vansittart did not exaggerate when he wrote,[21] ". . . . for war he (*i.e.*, the Nawab) was totally unfit from his excessive and known timidity . . . ." Gurgin Khan triumphantly led his men almost up to the neighbourhood of the fort of Mukwanpur which stood on the ridge dominating the valley of the Kurra.[22] The fort commanded a strategic point, guarding as it did one of the entrances into Nepal, and as such, its capture was absolutely essential. Gurgin Khan intended therefore to storm the fort, but before he could do so, he had to be master of the Mukwanpur ridge itself. He sent a detachment of his forces to force its way up to the summit of the pass.[23] There ensued a fierce encounter between the Nawab's troops and the Gurkhas. The latter offered a stout resistance against the invaders, and inflicted heavy losses on them. Mere numbers were in the beginning of no avail against the guerilla tactics of the defenders, and the number of the wounded and slain among the Nawab's troops was very large. The bloody engagement went on from morning till the afternoon, and at last the mountaineers

[20] 5th of the Rajab, 1176 (*vide* Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, Alld. Univ. MS., p. 782). The Siyar does not give the date of Gurgin Khan's arrival at the pass where the momentous battle took place.

[21] Narrative, II, p. 187. (This view is amply corroborated by other authorities too).

[22] Kirkpatrick's Account of the Kingdom of Nepaul, pp. 24-5.

[23] Siyar, p. 717. Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V., p. 608).
Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, Alld. Univ., MS., p. 782.
Muzaffar-Namah, Alld. Univ., MS., p. 335.

decided to effect a retreat. Towards the evening the victors reached the top of the ridge overlooking the fort of Mukwanpur. Theirs was indeed a hard-won victory, and it reflected great credit on their endurance and bravery.

Tired after the day's fight, the victors encamped on the summit of the pass to have some rest for the night. The night was dark,[24] and nobody suspected that the enemies were close by ready to make a surprise attack. The Nawab's army lay care-free and fatigued, and the officers were criminally negligent. They sadly neglected to keep watch on the movements of the enemies. The result was a foregone conclusion! Under cover of night, the latter issued from their mountain retreat, and made a sudden attack. Gurgin Khan's men were taken absolutely unawares. There was a regular panic when the hillmen attacked them from all sides with stones, arrows, and musketbolts.[25] The Nawab's troops could hardly offer any opposition, and panic-stricken as they were, they began to retreat precipitately down to the bottom of the pass, where Gurgin Khan had encamped. A large number among them were killed during retreat, and most of their guns and ammunitions were seized by the enemies.[26]

It was a disgraceful rout, and Gurgin Khan suddenly lost all hope of success. It must have been with a heavy heart that he witnessed the shattered army that had tragically belied all his bright expectations. His own reputation and that of his new army were blasted. The poor general grew

[24] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V., p. 608).

[25] Siyar, p. 717. Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, Alld. Univ., MS., p. 782.

[26] *Ibid*, and Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V., p. 608).
Muzaffar-Namah (Alld. Univ., MS., p. 335).

anxious for his own safety, as punishment seemed to be in store for him at the hands of his disappointed master. He was in great despair.[27] He deemed it futile to proceed with his demoralised troops, whereas he expected to be signally censured, or punished, if he chose to come back to the Nawab.[28] He was so much ashamed of his failure, that he dared not show his face again to the latter. When he was informed of this disaster, the Nawab himself grew despondent and decided after some hesitation to recall the general.[29] It has been suggested by Kalyan Singh that the Nawab felt thoroughly humiliated after this.[30] That the latter should have been bitterly humiliated is easy to understand. He had started with very great hopes, and he had now to return after sustaining a disgraceful defeat.

It is indeed curious that the Nawab made no further attempts, and chose to return to Monghyr. The following reasons may be suggested for this:—

(*i*) The Nawab may have realised the futility of prolonging the expedition with his shattered army;

(*ii*) Gurgin Khan's attitude was also not encouraging;

(*iii*) The cost of further operations would have been prohibitive;

[27] Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 783).

[28] Siyar, p. 717.

[29] *Ibid.* Ali Ibrahim Khan had to be deputed to bring the general back, as the latter was unwilling to appear before the Nawab out of shame and remorse.

[30] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V., p. 608).

(*iv*) Prithwi Narayan also urged him in the meanwhile to abandon the expedition;

(*v*) The quarrels between the Company's servants and the Nawab's officials suddenly assumed a serious character after the rejection of Mr. Vansittart's regulations by the council at Calcutta, and the Nawab therefore resolved to hasten to his capital.

Thus ended ignominiously the Nawab's abortive plan of conquest. The Nepal expedition not only caused a heavy drain on the Nawab's resources, but weakened the morale of his new forces. The Nawab's own prestige was sorely affected. The failure of the expedition was obviously due to a number of circumstances. The idea of attacking a mountainous country with an ill-trained army was intrinsically unsound. Besides, the difficulties that are to be met with and surmounted in such a country were practically unknown, while the chances of success against the guerilla tactics of the mountaineers were grossly miscalculated. Ill-concerted as the enterprise undoubtedly was, a study of the expedition makes it abundantly clear that it was ill-managed from the beginning, and its disgraceful conclusion partly resulted from the lack of ordinary prudence and leadership on the part of the Nawab's officers, and the supine negligence of Gurgin Khan himself. The attempt on the fort of Mukwanpur was both ill-judged and hasty. Gurgin Khan should himself have led his men on this occasion, but he remained encamped at a safe distance, and entrusted the command to inefficient people. On the whole, this unsuccessful expedition is an interesting and little known episode in the eventful history of Bengal during this period.

CHAPTER XI

MIR QASIM'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE PRIVATE INLAND TRADE OF THE ENGLISH

Before setting forth on his ill-fated expedition against Nepal, the Nawab had informed his officers of his recent agreement[1] with Mr. Vansittart in regard to the inland duties to be paid by the Company's servants. It was not only most unwise and tactless, but was a deliberate defiance of the Governor's instructions. Mr. Vansittart[2] writes, "He (*i.e.*, the Nawab) could no way have given his enemies a greater advantage than by dispatching as he did copies of my letter to all parts of the country, and enjoining his aumils to enforce the immediate observance of the regulations therein proposed, without waiting until directions in consequence were sent from Calcutta to our factories jointly, with the orders of his officers, which he delivered me for that purpose . . . . I did not intend the regulations should take place till general orders were sent everywhere; and the Nawab himself well knew that my orders could not take place, till joined with those of the Board, which he had therefore desired me to obtain. Of course I expected the Nawab would wait, till I could write him from Calcutta of

[1] For details, *vide* Beng. Pub. Cons., Dec. 27, 1762.
Beng. Pub. Cons., Jan. 17, 1763. Beng. Pub. Cons., Jan. 20, 1763. Trans. P.L.R., Jan.-Sept. 1763, No. 1. pp. 1—3. Trans., P.L.I., 1762-3, No. 4, p. 9. Vansittart's Narrative, **II.** pp. 155—59.

[2] Narrative, II, pp. 201-2.

the resolutions of the Council." The Nawab knew very well that the regulations proposed by the Governor could not be treated as final, till the Council formally ratified them, and Mr. Vansittart had made this clear to the Nawab at the time of his departure from Monghyr.[3] But, no sooner had Mr. Vansittart left, than the Nawab instructed his 'aumils' to enforce the regulations, and seize those 'gumashtahs' who refused to comply with them.[4]

It has nowhere been explained why the Nawab rashly ordered the enforcement of the regulations without awaiting the final decision of the Council. A number of probable explanations can be suggested.

(*i*) The Nawab may have regarded the promise of Mr. Vansittart to procure the sanction of the Council as a sufficient justification for issuing his orders in advance. The Governor too confessed[5] in his narrative, "It was not till after my arrival in Calcutta that I suspected any objections could be made to the regulations which I had settled with the Nawab." It is quite likely therefore that the Nawab should have concluded[6] that the Governor's agreement was, for all practical purposes, final, and the Council would simply accord

[3] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 716). Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ., MS., p. 780). Muzaffar-Namah (Alld. Univ., MS., p. 336). Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V., p. 607).

[4] Narrative, II, p. 199, Siyar, p. 718.

[5] Narrative, II, p. 204.

[6] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 9, p. 8. The Nawab wrote saying that he had imagined the gentlemen of the Council would assent to the agreement.

its formal approval to it in due course. Mr. Vansittart frankly admits,[7] "I made no scruple to assure the Nawab they (*i.e.*, the regulations) should take place, especially as I conceived myself to be fully authorised by the Board to act for them on this occasion." The Nawab may be presumed to have placed an undue reliance[8] on such a hasty promise made by Mr. Vansittart.

(*ii*) Ghulam Husain suggests,[9] "He (*i.e.*, the Nawab) wrote to his officers everywhere to give them notice of the agreement he expected, and to put them upon their guards; lest, meanwhile, and until the reglement should come up, the English private traders might find means to evade the custom, and the duty taxes." The author's idea is that the Nawab had not ordered the immediate enforcement of the agreement, but the imprudent, and overzealous officers could not keep it secret, and began rashly to enforce it on their own initiative. Kalyan Singh too has echoed[10] this view, "But his officers could not manage the business in a tactful manner, and began to interfere in the trade of the English."

[7] Narrative, II, p. 163.

[8] Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, (MS.), p. 780.

[9] Siyar (Raymond's Translation, Cal. Reprint, II, p. 445), *vide* Text, p. 716.

[10] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V., p. 607).

(*iii*) The Nawab may have thought that by promptly broadcasting the agreement throughout the country he would be able to force the hands of the Council, and compel the Governor to abide by his promise at all costs.

(*iv*) It may again be that after Mr. Vansittart's departure the Nawab regretted having accepted the agreement at all. He had certainly aimed at crushing the private trade of the Englishmen, and, it is known, had very unwillingly approved of the regulations proposed by Mr. Vansittart. Could he have believed that by immediately enforcing them on the authority of the latter's letter, he would be able to ruin this trade?

(*v*) That the Nawab did not patiently await the decision of the Council may have been due to another reason. He may have thought that his dignity would be hurt, if he were to be dictated to by the Council in this matter. It was enough that he had condescended to agree to the proposed preferential treatment of the English merchants. Did he think it derogatory to his honour to wait for the Council's concurrence in the proposed settlement? As a matter of fact, the Nawab subsequently declared[11] that he had neither negotiated, nor would ever care to negotiate

[11] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 9, p. 8.

with the Council in the matter of the private inland trade of the Englishmen.

Not only did Mir Qasim give his officers notice of the regulations, but he also directed them to punish the defaulters severely. The overbearing officials strictly followed these instructions, and began to tyrannize over the Company's 'gumashtahs.'[12] An idea of their high-handedness can be formed from the following facts:—

(*i*) Duties on even the Company's cloth began to be unjustly demanded at different places[13] and the Governor had to protest against this more than once.

[12] Siyar, p. 716. Muzaffar-Namah (MS.), p. 336. Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (MS.), p. 780.

Muhammad Ali, Faujdar of Dacca, who was particularly guilty of such wanton acts was thus warned by Mr. Cartier, Chief of the Factory at Dacca

"To Muhammad Aly,

Sir,

The strange and violent proceedings of the different Sickdars, zemindars and Chowkeydars in the district of Dacca in stopping the English trade, plundering their gumashtas, and servants, and affronting their colours, oblige me as Chief of the Company's affairs at Dacca, to apply to you for satisfaction for these insults, and to demand a reason for such an extraordinary conduct. I can scarcely believe, Sir, that these actions can be the result of your orders and much less Cossim Aly Khan's; but as you cannot be ignorant of the secret springs of them, I require of you a positive explanation concerning this matter. You must be sensible of the danger an invasion of the privileges granted to the English must be attended with, and the resentment we have it in our power to show, and have shewn in instances of the like nature. I choose to communicate my sentiments by letter, well knowing the many mistakes that happen in sending and answering messages the sense of them very often being perverted." (Beng. Pub. Cons., Jan. 17, 1763).

[13] Trans., P.L.I., 1762-3, No. 7 (p. 10); No. 8 (p. 12); No. 12 (p. 14).

(*ii*) The Nawab's officials, now that they were suddenly invested with extraordinary powers, at once abused them by oppressing, and even arresting the 'dallals' and weavers who supplied the Company with cloth.[14]

(*iii*) Boats, notwithstanding that they were provided with the usual 'dastak' of the Company, were needlessly stopped, and the delay caused in this manner obviously caused great loss.[15]

(*iv*) The Faujdar of Dacca was reported to have ordered the 'amils' to make it impossible for Englishmen to remain in the country, and punish those who had any dealings with the latter. This was a typical instance of the insolent proceedings of Muhammad Ali Beg, Faujdar of Dacca. The Governor wrote[16] in the course of his letter, " . . . it is his (*i.e.*, the Faujdar's) design not to suffer a single Englishman in the country, and to punish whoever shall take upon himself the name of an Englishman; accordingly the Company's business, and that of the private gentlemen, has been

[14] Letter to the Faujdar of Dacca; Trans., P.L.I., 1762-3, No. 13 (p. 16).

[15] Letter to the Faujdar of Rajmahal; Trans., P.L.I., 1762-3, No. 16 (p. 18).

[16] Trans., P.L.I., 1762-3, No. 21 (p. 22).

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everywhere stopped, whereby they have been, and still are, subjected to many losses; and the agreement which was made between you and me, for the removal of the disputes between your dependents, and ours, has been entirely broken off by Mahomed Allee." It is certainly difficult to understand how the Nawab's officers could issue orders on their own account, and proclaim, by beat of drum, that the Englishmen should not be allowed to remain in the country.[17] As such complaints were reported from all parts, it is apparent that these officers may have acted under the orders of their master himself.[18]

(*v*) The Company had so long jealously maintained its sole monopoly of saltpetre produced in Bihar, but complaints[19] were received from Patna that the 'amils' had begun[20] to obstruct the transit of saltpetre, and oppress the 'asamis' who supplied the Company with saltpetre.

(*vi*) The Faujdar of Rangamati was guilty of a flagrant abuse of his powers, and the council had to send a party of sepoys to

[17] Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 22, 1763.
[18] Muzaffar-Namah (MS.), p. 333.
[19] Narrative, II, p. 279.
[20] Trans., P.L.I., 1762-3, No. 18 (p. 19).

arrest him.[21] It was reported that he had not only been stopping the boats at every 'ghat,' but had demanded as much duty as he pleased, and had arbitrarily plundered the 'manjhis,' and 'dandis,' besides ill-treating the peons of the Englishmen. Such violences, and extortions practised by a Faujdar were surely not uncommon, and prove either these were instigated by the Nawab, or the latter's control over his officers was extremely lax.

(*vii*) The Council was further informed by Ellis[22] that the Nawab's officers in Bihar had recently demanded a duty of nine per cent on opium, although it was exported by the Company to foreign markets. The majority in the Council resolved that the Council at Patna should send sepoys to protect their 'gumashtahs'; and the Governor had to remonstrate with the Nawab against his ordering the levy of a duty on the Company's opium.[23]

While the Nawab's officers undeniably abused their authority, and exceeded their powers, the Company's servants resisted the demand of duties fixed by Mr. Vansittart, and zealously sought to protect their trade even by resorting

[21] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 4, 1763.

[22] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 4, 1763.

[23] Trans., P.L.I., 1762-3, No. 31, (p. 30).
Trans., P.L.I., 1762-3, No. 34 (p. 37).

to force, whenever necessary. It was a peculiar situation on the whole. The officers of the Nizamat insisted on levying duties, and punishing the defaulters, while the English gentlemen refused to pay any duty, unless they should be called upon to do so by the Council. The result was a bitter struggle, and acts of violence were committed on either side. All this was due to the precipitate haste of the Nawab who refused to wait till the Council either ratified, or altered his agreement with Mr. Vansittart. The attitude of the English merchants has been usually condemned, and there is no doubt that they were actuated by selfish motives in their violent opposition to the demand of duties. Apart from purely personal considerations, there were, however, certain arguments in their favour:—

(*i*) It is nowhere mentioned in the Firmans that the privilege of duty-free trade was to be restricted to sea-borne trade alone, and there is no definite prohibition of inland trade therein. In short, Farrukh-siyar's grant[24] exempted the English from the payment of duties both in their individual as

[24] It may be studied in the following:—Wilson's Early Annals, Vol. II, p. 287, etc.

Orme's History, Vol. II, p. 17, etc.

Vansittart's Narrative, Vol. I, pp. 9—15.

Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 22, 1763.

First Report of the Select Committee, 1773, pp. 77—90.

Fraser's History of Nadir Shah, pp. 47—57.

For a detailed review of the grant, *vide* Dr. Balkrishna's article on "The Magna Charta and After," (Indian Historical Records Commission Proceedings, Vol. VII, pp. 79—87.

well as corporate capacities, though as a matter of fact, the former Nawabs of Bengal had disallowed such an interpretation of the Firmans.

(*ii*) It was argued with reason that a sudden enforcement of the proposed regulations would be disastrous to their private trade.[25]

(*iii*) The Company's servants further refused to abide by the agreement on the ground that it had not been sanctioned by the Council.

(*iv*) They were directed by the Council itself not to pay any regard to the orders which the Nawab had sent to all the factories.[26]

(*v*) There was no alternative but to use force when the rapacious officers of the government deliberately oppressed the Company's agents, and impeded its trade in a most despotic manner. Mr. Vansittart himself admits[27] in his Narrative, "Having been long under the yoke of our gomastahs, they no sooner had a prospect of being freed from it, than they, in their turn, would rule despotically, and use their authority to unlawful purposes. This gave our subordinate factories daily opportunity of making fresh

[25] Beng. Pub. Cons., Jan. 17, 1763 (*vide* Letter from Dacca to the Council, dated January 10, 1763.

[26] Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 1, 1763.

[27] Narrative, II, p. 254.

complaints to the Board of the interruption of their business."

(*vi*) They had been paying at different places duties on salt and tobacco[28] and now they were suddenly subjected to new demands which they considered to be a breach of their special privilege.[29]

(*vii*) They rightly objected to being subjected to the arbitrary demands of the 'chaukidars' who wanted to collect as much, and as many times as possible.[30]

(*viii*) They are not the only people who demanded a preferential treatment. It may be pointed out that the Muslims also enjoyed special concessions in the matter of the duties. The Nawab would certainly have been more justified in opposing the claims of the English, if he had abolished the marked differentiation in favour of his own co-religionists.

(*ix*) They came to know that the Nawab had directed his officers to show special consideration to the Governor's agents[31] alone. Naturally, this formed a plausible argument against Mr. Vansittart.

[28] Beng. Pub. Cons., Nov. 15, 1762.

[29] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 2, 1763.

[30] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 4, 1763.

[31] Narrative, II, p. 425. Trans., P.L.I., 1762-3, No. 31 (p. 30). First Report of the Select Committee (Appendix 34).

The hostile majority in the Council, who were further strengthened by the arrival[32] of all absent members except the chiefs of Patna and Chittagong, rejected the Governor's regulations and came to the decision that although the English were entitled by the imperial 'Firmans' to trade in country produce duty-free, the Nawab could be allowed a duty of two and a half per cent on salt only, and that the English 'gumashtahs' should not be subject to the jurisdiction of the Nawab's officials.[33]

In the meanwhile, the Nawab had been informed of the rejection of the agreement by the Council, and he indignantly protested against it in a number of letters written to the Governor. His feelings can be best understood from the following characteristic passages[34] in his letters:—

(*i*) "When you came here, an agreement in writing was made between us, which I imagined all the gentlemen would consent to; but it is amazing that not a single person has approved of it."

(*ii*) "I neither have, nor shall negotiate with any person but yourself, and therefore, I plainly write, that if you intend to regard the agreement made between us, you should act in such a manner that the gentlemen may

[32] Beng. Pub. Cons., Jan. 17, 1763. (The Council summoned all the absent members to consider the situation).

[33] Beng. Pub. Cons., Mar. 1 and 2, 1763.

[34] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 9 (p. 8), No. 22 (p. 23), No. 23 (p. 27).

not make their objections to it; if not, advise me of it. I understand that a number of the gentlemen are inclined to establish another Subahdar. This appears to me a trivial matter. Let them establish whom they please; it is of no consequence to me."

(*iii*) "To be sure, whatever your gomastahs write is all exactly just and proper; and my people tell nothing but lies and barefaced falsities . . . I must cut off my officers' heads, but your gomastahs who are guilty of oppressions receive encouragement from you."

(*iv*) "Your order is absolute with respect to my people, but you have not the least command over your own."

The attitude of the Nawab was now just as obdurate as that of the Council. He insisted that if the agreement was to be modified at all, it must be in accordance with his suggestions. He wrote[35] to Mr. Vansittart on the 26th of February. 1763, "you know very well, Sir, that I never intended such a treaty; it was merely in compliance with your pleasure that I assented to it." He now demanded three amendments to the former agreement, and these clearly show that the Nawab aimed at the virtual extinction of the English private trade. The only conclusion that one can draw from his letters is that the question of the duties was only secondary, and that he was more keen on absolutely stopping the

[35] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 22 (p. 23).

private trade of the Company's servants. His demands were as follows[36]:—

(*i*) "From the beginning till now the Nazim of Bengal corresponded with the Governor of Calcutta, as I have done and do with you, hearing no correspondence with the rest of the Board." The Nawab meant that all his negotiation or correspondence should be with the Governor alone, and not with the rest of the Council. Had he not recently found it to his cost that the Governor's word was not law?

(*ii*) "Now, I say, that gomastahs are to trade as heretofore, in merchandize imported, and exported, and refrain from those articles of trade which interfere with the revenues due to my Government, and are a cause of disputes and the ruin of the inhabitants, and poor people." This was an unusual demand indeed! The Nawab obviously wanted to put an entire stop to the inland trade of the English gentlemen.

(*iii*) "I wish not to be concerned in a charge of so much vexation; you may be pleased to find some other to undertake it. For my part I am heartily tired of those disputes, and vexations." In short, the Nawab objected to the dual rule that would prevail, if his

[36] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 22 (p. 23).
Beng. Pub. Cons., March 7, 1763.

officers were not to control the English agents, and if the latter constantly interfered with the Government under the pretence of carrying on trade.

The Nawab's attitude appears from his letters to Mr. Vansittart, written during the months of February and March, to have undergone a complete change in regard to the whole question of the inland trade. Till recently, he had complained of the loss of his custom duties, and the high-handedness of the English agents, but he now plainly demanded an absolute stoppage of the inland trade of the English,—a point that has been generally ignored. He seems to have determined not to tolerate their private trade on any footing whatsoever. In order to justify his unjust demand, Mir Qasim wilfully distorted, and exaggerated the facts. The following[37] are only a few of his recent arguments against English inland trade, and these amply show how far he could be led away by sheer prejudice and hatred:—

(*i*) Every village and district in Bengal was ruined through the oppression of the English; and the people were deprived of their daily bread.

(*ii*) Revenue collection was entirely stopped, and as the Nawab puts it, "I am a sufferer in the revenues by near a krore of rupees!"

(*iii*) If the duty of 9 per cent was regarded exorbitant, the English gentlemen should give

[37] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 19 (p. 19); No. 14 (p. 13).

up their trade. Formerly, they had not traded in country produce.

(*iv*) His officers were beaten and chastised, if they dared to oppose the English agents; and he considered his own life to be in danger.

The Nawab's fury knew no bounds when he learnt that the gentlemen of the factories not only opposed the demand of duties, but even seized his officers under the instructions of the Council.[38] It may be noted that Mr. Vansittart too had agreed to the arrest of tyrannical officers, and he defended his attitude in the following words,[39] " . . . as the question was now whether the acting persons complained against should be seized, or war made directly with the Nawab himself, I concurred in the former . . . " The Nawab was determined not to put up with such violent proceedings, and he retaliated by ordering[40] the immediate arrest of English agents wherever found guilty of any oppression. It was a tactless act, and marked the definite commencement of that reckless policy of revenge, which ended in his ultimate downfall. Enraged at the unexpected opposition to and defiance of his authority, he treated the point of view of his opponents with supreme contempt, and refused to believe that his own officers were no less unscrupulous and overbearing than the English agents. The consequence was that his officers freely did

[38] Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 22, 1763.

[39] Narrative, II, p. 314.

[40] Siyar, p. 718, Muzaffar-Namah (MS.), p. 336.
Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (MS.), p. 783, Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 609).

whatever they liked, and the English merchants took the law into their hands just to prevent their trade from being stopped by the former. The Nawab ceased to pay any heed to the complaints against his officers,[41] while Mr. Vansittart was simply powerless to check the gentlemen of the factories. Numerous cases of conflict between the Company's servants, and those of the Nawab came to be reported in quick succession from different places.[42]

The disturbance that took place at Tajpur[43] early in March, 1763, was the most serious among the innumerable cases of quarrel, that occurred at this time. The Nawab as usual distorted the facts of the incident, and held Ellis alone to be responsible for it.[44] What happened was, briefly, this. On being informed that the Company's trade in Mow was being interrupted by the Nawab's officials,[45] Ellis sent Lieutenant Downie at the head of three companies of sepoys to Mow "with orders to clear the Company's business in that district, and seize all those who have interrupted it."[46] The officer captured Akbar Ali, Naib of Tajpur, and brought him prisoner to Patna, having left the Company's saltpetre at Tajpur in charge of a 'hawaldar,' a 'naik,' and twelve sepoys.[47] In the meantime, the Nawab had ordered a body

[41] Trans., P.L.I., 1762-3, No. 32 (p. 34).

[42] *Ibid.*, No. 12 (p. 14), No. 27 (p. 28), No. 31 (p. 30), and Narrative III, pp. 32-33.

[43] Narrative, III, p. 34.

[44] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., No. 28 (p. 34) and No. 29 (p. 35).

[45] Beng. Pub. Cons., June 6 (*vide* Letter from the gumastah of Mow, dated May 25). The Nawab subsequently put a stop to all purchasing of saltpetre.

[46] Ellis to the Governor, March 6, 1763.

[47] *Ibid.*, March 15, 1763.

of five hundred horsemen to intercept the English detachment; they arrived at Tajpur, and attacked the sepoys stationed there. Of the twelve, four were killed, three wounded and the rest, with the Company's 'gumashtah', carried prisoners[48] to the Nawab who, being afraid to proceed to extremities reprimanded and released them.[49]

In his letter[50] to the Governor, dated March 14, the Nawab gave a highly coloured account of the incident, and alleged that it was Ellis who "has created these disturbances under pretence of the saltpetre," his 'amil' "was by no means in fault," and that when Muhammad Amin Khan "drew near to the factory your sepoys there, by order of the gomashtah, fired upon them." The Nawab not only did not admit that his 'amil' had obstructed the Company's saltpetre, but omitted to mention the fact that he had sent his 'jamadar' at the head of five hundred horse to oppose the sepoys under Lieutenant Downie. The Nawab went to the length of referring to the factors as "Your servants and men of low character."[51] All this was well calculated to intensify the Council's hatred for him. The action of Ellis in sending sepoys to protect the Company's saltpetre, howsoever arbitrary it might appear, was not unjustified, because,[52] firstly, he had acted strictly in accordance with the orders of the Council, secondly, it was useless to complain to the Nawab when he had refused to answer his

[48] *Ibid.*

[49] Narrative, III, p. 34.

[50] Trans., P.L.I., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 29 (p. 35).

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 24, 1763.

letters, and listen to his complaints, thirdly, he had no remedy but to use force to free the Company's business, and finally, the Nawab had so far in spite of almost daily representation failed to direct his men not to obstruct English trade till a new agreement was concluded. The Nawab's sending of an armed force to repel the Company's sepoys was an injudicious step. Such retaliatory methods were bound to lead to a rupture. Either he should have openly declared war against the English, or he should have graciously come to a compromise with the Council. He did neither, but by his own hasty and ill-judged actions and measures[53] he accentuated the breach between himself and the English.

In March, the Nawab executed a veritable *coup d'etat* by announcing the total remission[54] of all duties for two years. This was an extremely shrewd decision. It has often been regarded as a memorable instance of his benevolence towards and sympathy for the Indian merchants.[55] That this view is untenable can be easily demonstrated. The reasons which the Nawab himself gave for suddenly abolishing all duties are as follows[56]:—

[53] Siyar, p. 719.

[54] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 22, 1763.

[55] R. C. Dutt writes in his Economic History of British India, p. 29, " In his noble indignation, Mir Qasim did one of the best and most benevolent acts which have ever been done by any king or ruler in the East."

[56] Siyar, p. 720. Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (MS.), p. 784.
Muzaffar-Namah (MS.), p. 336. Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 609). Riyaz-us-Salatin (A.S.B. Text, p. 382). Narrative, III, p. 72.

Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 32, p. 41.

Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 33, p. 44.

(*i*) He argued that he never got anything by collecting duties, as most of the merchants in the country could pass their goods under cover of the English 'dastaks';

(*ii*) he considered the duties to be a source of constant dispute between him and the English;

(*iii*) he thought it would be a useless waste of money to maintain the 'chaukis' for a few poor merchants who were either too obscure to secure the protection of the English agents, or too poor to afford the duties; and

(*iv*) he wanted to encourage the merchants in general by an entire abolition of duties.

These reasons are neither convincing, nor even plausible. That the Nawab could not collect anything on account of duties is manifestly a travesty of truth. It should not be forgotten that the inland transit duties used to be farmed out. Again, the customs duties formed only a small part of the state dues; and though a large number of merchants did successfully evade the payment of duties, it cannot be maintained that the Nawab was defrauded of the most part of his dues. It would be an equally sweeping exaggeration to say that most of the merchants in the country were afforded the protection of the 'dastaks' issued by the factors. It is, therefore, difficult to believe that the 'chaukis' existed for a few poor merchants alone, whose contributions could not, according to the Nawab, repay the cost of the maintenance of those 'chaukis.' Moreover, the very fact that the Nawab abolished the duties for two years

only should not be lost sight of. If he had been actuated by feelings of generosity alone, he would have remitted the duties for good in order to encourage the trade and commerce of Bengal. There is no doubt that the Nawab was far too clever to have temporarily given up his right to the duties without some definite object. It has already been pointed out that he was bent upon crushing the inland trade of the English, and that he had always looked upon their commercial activities as a potential danger to his government. He knew full well that the only reason why the factors derived huge profits out of their private trade was their exemption from duties, which gave them an unquestioned advantage over the indigenous merchants who paid heavy duties on their goods. If all duties were remitted for English and Indian merchants alike, the latter would surely be able to undersell the former, and thus ruin the trade of their foreign competitors. In fact, the Nawab could never have been unaware of this consequence of his policy. He must have known that a general remission of duties would ultimately be ruinous to the private trade of the English who could never have successfully competed with the Indian merchants, once their privilege of the 'dastak' was rendered valueless.

The abolition of duties at this juncture was not due to a sudden whim of the Nawab. There is sufficient evidence to show that he had been considering its feasibility for a long time past, and had even divulged his intention to the Governor during the latter's visit to Monghyr.[57] It was

[57] Messrs. Vansittart and Hastings to the Council, dated Dec. 15, 1762.

only owing to Mr. Vansittart's opposition that the Nawab had so long postponed the execution of this plan.[58] The Council's refusal to ratify the Governor's agreement excited the bitterest indignation of the Nawab, and he thought it highly disgraceful[59] to submit to the clamour of the hostile majority in the Council, whom he considered to be his personal enemies. The only way to escape a public humiliation was the immediate abolition of all duties, and by this means alone he could retaliate on his opponents effectively. It was consequently a very clever move. He had believed that his right to forego his own income could hardly be disputed, and that his action would eventually oblige the Council to yield to his demand of duties on English inland trade. The Nawab may also have expected that the Company too might force its servants to pay duties on their private trade in order to safeguard its own interests which would surely be adversely affected by the total abolition of duties. The majority in the Council did for obvious reasons exaggerate[60] the effect of the Nawab's declaration of free trade on the Company's business, but their argument was essentially correct. There can be no doubt about the fact that the abolition of duties would certainly have been, at least for some time, injurious to the Company's trade in Bengal. Mr. Vansittart himself had represented to the Nawab that his proposal of taking off duties in general would " prejudice our Honourable Masters' business by enhancing the number of purchasers,"[61]

[58] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 22, 1763.
[59] Siyar, p. 719.
[60] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 22, 1763.
[61] Narrative, II, p. 160.

although curiously enough, at the consultations of the Council he strongly defended the Nawab's action, and declared, ". . . . we hope the present regulation, instead of being a prejudice to the Company's business, may be an advantage to it."[62] The Governor's self-contradiction is amusing indeed. His desperate attempt to justify the Nawab's policy proved to be of no effect!

Shortly after this, the intelligence arrived from Patna of an act of unprecedented violence perpetrated at Gaya[63] at the Nawab's own instigation. This was a signal proof of the fact that the Nawab was at this time not unwilling to come to a rupture with the English, and it is strange that the Council did not immediately declare war against him, as the Gaya incident was a sufficient justification for the commencement of hostilities. The facts of the case are these.[64] A 'subadar' of the Company's troops had been permitted by the Chief at Patna, and Raja Naubat Rai, Naib of Patna, to pay a visit to Gaya for religious purposes, but he was seized on mere suspicion by the Nawab's people. On being informed of this, Ellis sent fifty sepoys to release him. The latter were unexpectedly attacked under the Nawab's orders by his troops from Tikarry, and the Commander of the Nawab's troops declared on being remonstrated with by the 'subadar' that he had been ordered to cut English sepoys to pieces wherever they could be found. In the skirmish that ensued, a 'hawaldar' was killed, and a number of sepoys were wounded, while the

[62] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 22, 1763.

[63] Narrative, III, p. 79.

[64] Beng. Pub. Cons., April 1, 1763.

rest managed somehow to escape to Patna after bravely defending themselves against about 4,000 of the Nawab's troops. It seems clear from the account of this affair that the Nawab was bent upon provoking the Council to a war. Only lately he had ordered an attack against the Company's sepoys at Tajpur, and had openly threatened the extirpation of the English; and the recent unprovoked attack against the English sepoys at Gaya was an unmistakable evidence of the Nawab's intention to defy the power of the English by a deliberate show of force, and thus publicly assert his independence of the Company.

CHAPTER XII

THE MISSION OF MESSRS. AMYATT AND HAY TO MIR QASIM (1763)

Mir Qasim's attitude after the disastrous conclusion of the Nepal expedition had been such as was bound to give the hostile majority in the Council numerous occasions for quarrel. He had not only betrayed an open distrust of the English, but had done everything to undermine their influence and trade in the country. The numerous acts of violence, which had been lately perpetrated by his subordinates could not all be unauthorised. Orders had also been issued by the zealous officials that no Englishman should be allowed to remain in the country, and that no ryot should have dealings with them. This could never have been due to the insolence of individual officials alone. The Nawab himself had declared his intention to oppose force by force, and had justified the attack that he had ordered to be made on the factory at Tajpur; and, finally, the unprovoked attack on the Company's sepoys at Gaya plainly indicated the bellicose temper of the Nawab. It was further reported that the Nawab had of late been making unusual preparations for war. To crown all, the latter had recently announced a total abolition of customs duties for two years. Nothing could have given greater offence to the majority in the Council, who had always regarded the Nawab as an enemy of the English, and now felt convinced of the necessity for overthrowing him.

The only alternative to an immediate declaration of war was an amicable compromise, and this was what the Governor honestly insisted upon, because he sincerely believed that the Nawab did not really mean to break with the English. Mr. Amyatt had offered to go[1] on a deputation to the Nawab with Mr. Hay to present the Council's demands, and negotiate the terms of a fresh agreement with respect to inland trade, and the need[2] for such a mission was considered to be all the more urgent, when the Council was informed of the sudden remission of all duties by the Nawab. This action of the latter was regarded as a virtual infringement of the Company's commercial privileges.[3] The Governor was directed by the Council to write[4] to the Nawab, ". . . . if you oppose our people in the execution of orders which we have authorized, and with which you have been acquainted, we shall look upon such a conduct as an open declaration of war, but to shew you our earnest desire to prevent such an event, we continue in our resolution to send you Mr. Amyatt (who will be accompanied by Mr. Hay) for the purpose we have wrote you, as soon as we shall receive your answer to that letter." The Nawab indignantly declined to receive any deputation, or conclude a new agreement, and in his letter,[5] dated March 22, referred to the Company's firmans in a most offensive and contemptuous

[1] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 7, 1763. Trans., P.L.I., 1762-63, Nos. 33—35, pp. 34—40.

[2] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 24, 1763.

[3] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 22, 1763.

[4] Trans., P.L.I., 1762-63, No. 40, p. 46.

[5] Trans., P.L.R., 1763, No. 32, p. 41 (Jan.-Sept.), No. 33, p. 44.

manner. His attitude was bitterly condemned by the majority in the Council[6] on April 1, but it was ultimately agreed that " the Nabob should again be wrote to, to insist of his receiving the deputation, and that Messrs. Amyatt and Hay should proceed to, and wait for, his answer at Cossimbazar." The Governor had to write[7] to the Nawab on the same day strongly protesting against the improper style of his letters, and urging the necessity of his receiving the proposed deputation. The Nawab was also definitely told that a refusal on his part to accede to the Council's demands would be looked upon as " a declaration on his side of his intention to come to a rupture."

It is clear from every one of the Nawab's letters that he was absolutely unwilling to welcome the mission of Amyatt and Hay, and that he sought to discourage the idea of any such deputation. His reasons were expressed in his characteristic style. In the first place, he represented that he did not expect any good would come out of a fresh agreement, and stated, " If the former treaty on which I depended is of no use to me, and I have not passed a single moment free from trouble and dispute, will a fresh treaty be of use to me? "[8] In the second place, he pointed out that as he had now abolished all duties, there remained no necessity for any negotiation, and added, " I have now only the revenues of a small parcel of land. If you send him to negotiate this, let me know. As to mercantile affairs, I have relinquished everything, and nothing remains for him

[6] Beng. Pub. Cons., April 1, 1763.

[7] Trans., P.L.I., 1762-63, No. 41, p. 46.

[8] Trans., P.L.R. (Jan.-Sept), 1763, No. 32, p. 41.

to negotiate."[9] Finally, he protested against the imprisonment of his 'amils,' and the frequent use of force by the Chiefs of factories, and argued that it was futile for him to negotiate under such humiliating circumstances. He wrote, "On the one side you use only violent measures, while on the other, looking towards the treaties between us, you send to confer. A conference, attended with such unreasonable violences, never was heard of in any country."[10]

Mir Qasim's objection to the proposed visit of Amyatt and Hay was, however, due to different reasons. Firstly, it is apparent from the Nawab's whole correspondence after the rejection of his agreement with the Governor by the Council that he believed his own deposition to be its real objective, and that he considered every step taken by it to be inspired by this motive. The very fact that the Council sent two of its members to treat with him served only to confirm his worst suspicions. Secondly, he knew that Amyatt was the leader of the opposition against himself, and that he had always condemned the late revolution.[11] He must have felt very uneasy when he was informed of his proposed mission to Monghyr. He regarded Amyatt in no other light than as one of his avowed opponents. It is thus easy to understand why he should have shown an extreme reluctance to accept his deputation. Thirdly, he was also

[9] Trans., P.L.R., No. 35, p. 48.

[10] Trans., P.L.R., No. 37, p. 52.

[11] Amyatt had very severely criticised the Revolution of 1760 in a formal minute soon after Mir Qasim's accession (Beng. Sel. Com., Jan. 8, 1761).

Vide also Verelst's View, etc., p. 48.

aware of Amyatt's close connection with Ellis, and this fact again may have caused his anxiety. He might have suspected that Amyatt was coming to Bihar at the instance of Ellis with some ulterior object. Fourthly, he was led to believe that Amyatt was to come at the head of a large force, and this made him extremely nervous. He thought that the proposed negotiation was only a convenient pretext for marching against his capital to depose him. Fifthly, he deemed it humiliating to submit to the dictation of Amyatt and Hay in matters that concerned his own government. In his letter, dated April 11, the Nawab indirectly gave vent to this feeling in the following words, "By what you write of other articles of business, besides the customs, I understand that for this remaining country, which is left for my share, you have appointed me aumil, or regard me as wadadar, or zemindar, or gomastah, or muttaseddee, that you have given in charge to the said gentlemen other articles of business, exclusive of customs." Lastly, the Nawab was surely encouraged[12] in his opposition to the proposed mission by his trusted general, Gurgin Khan, who advised his master to reject the proposal of the Council, because, if he happened to yield now, he would always have to submit to its dictates in future. In fact, the Nawab must have decided not to yield to the clamour of the Council in the hope that by his strong attitude he would be able to force it to accede to his own demands.

That the Nawab looked upon the proposed deputation as only a repetition of the mission that had brought about the overthrow of his father-in-law is in a way proved by

[12] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 720), Khulasat, (J.B.O.R.S., V., p. 609). Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 785).

his sudden internment of the two Seths, Mahtab Ray, and Sarup Chand. This was clearly due to his suspicion that the latter might be engaged in some secret conspiracy against him with the English. He knew what part these great bankers had played in the revolutions of 1757, and 1760; and, therefore, considered them too dangerous to be allowed to stay at Murshidabad just at this time when he expected a rupture with the English.[13] The Nawab resolved to remove the Seths from Murshidabad, and ordered Muhammad Taqi Khan, Faujdar of Birbhum, to seize, and hand them over to Marcat, an Armenian officer, who was sent to escort them to Monghyr.[14] As this was a breach[15] of the promise which the Nawab had made to Mr. Vansittart upon his accession to the masnad, the latter protested against this disgrace of the Seths, and represented to the Nawab that they were men of high rank, and had never been thus treated in the time of the former Nazims, and that the treatment now meted out to them was a violation of the agreement that had been made with respect to them at the time when the Nawab was raised to the Masnad.[16] To this complaint the Nawab replied sarcastically[17] that when the English daily carried away his subordinates, and kept them in confinement there could be no breach of faith, but when he chanced to summon one of his own dependents, the agreement, of course, was violated! The Nawab justified

[13] Siyar, p. 721, Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, p. 786.

[14] Siyar, p. 721.

[15] Vansittart's Narrative, III, p. 206.

[16] Trans., P.L.I., 1762-63, No. 45, p. 50.

[17] Trans. P.L.R. (Jan.-Sept.), 1763, No. 44, p. 68.

the step taken against the Seths on the following grounds.[18] Firstly, he held that they were his "dependents." This was, however, an absurd claim. They were the heads of one of the greatest banking houses in India,[19] and they occupied too extraordinary a position in the country to be mere creatures of any particular Nawab. Secondly, he complained, ". . . . they have put a stop to all their mercantile business, and have done all they could to throw the affairs of the Nizamat into confusion, and treated me as an enemy, and outlaw." This is too sweeping a charge to need any elaborate criticism. Thirdly, he maintained that they were obliged to settle wherever the Nawab himself lived. "Now I have brought them to this place," he wrote, "that they may always be with me, and attend to my business and their own according to custom." This is a plausible excuse, but the Nawab did not explain why he had not forced them to accompany him earlier, and why he had recourse to violent methods in subjecting them to unprecedented ill-treatment at Murshidabad. The real explanation of their forcible deportation to Monghyr is the Nawab's apprehension of a secret understanding between them and the English.

Amyatt's intercession[20] on their behalf confirmed this suspicion of the Nawab who retorted to him saying that the Seths must have had some kind of connection with the English, otherwise it would be difficult to account for their

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] Siyar, p. 721.

[20] Amyatt to the Nawab. Trans., P.L.R. (Apl.-June), 1763, No. 6, p. 6.

uneasiness about this affair.[21] In short, the Nawab was afraid that the Seths might escape to Calcutta, and join the Council against him.[22] It was in order to anticipate this that he suddenly compelled them to come to Monghyr without giving them previous notice. At Monghyr, they were outwardly treated with every distinction, and were allowed to attend the 'Durbar,' and transact business as heretofore, but the Nawab secretly ordered spies to keep an eye on their movements lest they should attempt to escape.[23] Thus the Nawab not only prevented the possibility of any intrigue between the Seths and Amyatt, but also brought under his control the richest bankers in Bengal whose wealth he could freely confiscate in case a war broke out with the English.

As for the deputation of Amyatt and Hay, when the Nawab realised it could not be stopped, or postponed, he insisted that those gentlemen should not be accompanied by more than one or two companies of sepoys.[24] "If they come with only one or two companies of necessary attendants," he wrote, "I have no objection." Again, on April 15, the Nawab wrote more emphatically,[25] "Recall all your troops that you have dispatched by every road towards this way, and let Mr. Amyatt proceed hither in the same manner that you came to visit me . . . . If you consent not to this, and refuse to recall your forces, and are obstinately bent upon my dishonour, I am without remedy."

[21] Nawab to Amyatt. Trans., P.L.R., 1763, No. 14, p. 11.

[22] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V., p. 610).

[23] *Ibid.*, and Siyar, p. 721; Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, p. 786.

[24] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept. (1763), No. 37, p. 52.

[25] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept. (1763), No. 40, p. 60.

Messrs. Amyatt and Hay, who had so long been awaiting the Nawab's final reply at Cossimbazar, received on the 21st of April a reluctant permission[26] to proceed to Monghyr, but they were asked to send their escort back. It was only after a heated debate that the majority in the Council came to the decision that Messrs. Amyatt and Hay should proceed to Monghyr.[27] As a matter of fact, the suspicions of the Nawab were absolutely baseless. His idea[28] that troops were being secretly despatched in every direction was only an illusion.

Mr. Vansittart writes,[29] " At this time not a soldier had moved from his quarters." He assured[30] the Nawab that only a small military escort had been sent with Amyatt and Hay. It is needless to add that the Nawab had been labouring under the misconception that Amyatt was coming at the head of a large army with some sinister design. The memory of Mr. Vansittart's mission to Murshidabad in 1760 must have been fresh in his mind.

Anxious to know the real intentions of Amyatt, the Nawab deputed Mir Abdullah and Ghulam Husain, the author of the Siyar, along with twenty spies to meet the latter while he was on his way to Monghyr, and find out the underlying motive of his visit.[31] As Amyatt had been simply informed that Mir Abdullah and Ghulam Husain

[26] Trans., P.R.L., 1763, Nos. 5 and 6, pp. 3—5.

[27] Beng. Pub. Cons., April 20, 1763.

[28] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept. (1763), No. 40, p. 60.

[29] Narrative, III, p. 144.

[30] Trans., P.L.I., 1762-63, No. 44, p. 49.

[31] Siyar, p. 722.

were coming to receive him[32] on behalf of the Nawab, he never knew that he was to be closely watched by spies disguised as menial servants, or messengers. It was Ghulam Husain who whispered to Amyatt while embracing him that spies had been set upon them.[33] Warned by the latter, Amyatt avoided any discussion on the objects of his mission lest it should be misrepresented. The Nawab recalled Mir Abdullah and Ghulam Husain, when the party reached Bhagalpur, and subjected them to a minute cross-examination of which a vivid description has been left by Ghulam Husain in his Siyar.[34] The Nawab seems now to have been under the impression that Amyatt had come either to intrigue against him, or pry into the state of his army and fort. When the party reached the neighbourhood of Monghyr, the Nawab sent his nephew Abu Ali Khan and Raja Naubat Ray to offer a formal reception to Amyatt and Hay.[35] At Monghyr, the latter were suitably welcomed by the Nawab himself who paid them a complimentary visit at their camp. Amyatt and Hay duly returned the visit to the Nawab. During these ceremonial visits the usual feasts, dances, and bonfires were arranged in honour of the guests.[36]

It was on[37] May 15 that Amyatt waited on the Nawab to explain the demands of the Council. During the conversation that followed, they found it difficult to discuss each item separately, hence the Nawab asked Amyatt to set

[32] Nawab to Amyatt. Trans., P.L.R., 1763, No. 13, p. 10.
[33] Siyar, p. 722.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 723.
[35] Nawab to Amyatt. Trans., P.L.R., 1763, No. 16, p. 15.
[36] Siyar, p. 723.
[37] Amyatt and Hay to Calcutta, dated May 18, 1763.

it down in writing all that the Council had to represent to him. Thereupon, Amyatt delivered to the Nawab a Persian translation of the list of the demands, and it was then duly read and discussed. The latter did not give any final reply, and asked Amyatt to leave the list and the firmans with him. The next evening, Amyatt and Hay were asked by the Nawab's munshi, Hafiz Asrar Khan, to sign and seal the Persian copy of the demands, and this was accordingly done. On the 18th Amyatt and Hay again waited on the Nawab, and asked for his final reply. The latter only gave a noncommittal reply, and requested for a few days' time to consider the demands fully.

The following[38] is a summary of the demands presented by Amyatt and Hay:—

(*i*) The recent agreement made with Mr. Vansittart should be annulled.

(*ii*) Reparation should be made for the losses sustained by the English merchants both before and after the said agreement.

(*iii*) The sanad granted by the Nawab for the remission of all duties should be cancelled, as it deprives the English of the advantages to which they are entitled by the Royal Firman.

(*iv*) The disputes between the English agents, and the dependents of the Nawab should be adjusted in the following manner—A

[38] These formed part of the instructions of the Council to Messrs. Amyatt and Hay (*vide* Beng. Pub. Cons., March 22, 24, 28 and April 1, 1763, and also June 6, 1763).

gumashtah shall, in the first instance, apply to an officer of the government residing on the spot, but if he fails to receive immediate satisfaction, he shall send his complaint to the Chief of the nearest factory. If, on the other hand, a dependent of the Nawab has a complaint against a gumashtah, he shall give the latter due notice of it, and in case the said gumashtah declines to settle the matter amicably, he shall report the case to the Chief of the nearest factory. The gentlemen of the factories shall be obliged to maintain a register of such complaints, a copy of which shall be sent to Calcutta every month.

(*v*) There should always be an English Resident at the 'Darbar' to transact all business between the Government and the Company.

(*vi*) "Jagiri" sanads should be granted to the Company for Burdwan, Midnapur and Chittagong.

(*vii*) The money coined at the Company's mint should be declared current, and the English should be permitted to coin three lakhs of rupees annually in each of the mints of Dacca and Patna.

(*viii*) The amount spent by Muhammad Riza Khan in the expedition to Tippera should be reimbursed.

(*ix*) An exemplary punishment should be inflicted on the officer who insolently offered un-

provoked violence to the Company's sepoys at Gaya.

(x) The Seths should be released.

On May 26,[39] the Nawab at last sent his formal reply to the above demands. A perusal of his reply[40] makes it quite clear that the Nawab was determined neither to be tactful, nor to be conciliatory. It may be thus summed up:—

(i) The officers are being notified that the Governor's agreement is null and void;

(ii) The losses of the English merchants can be compensated, when his own losses are fully indemnified;

(iii) It was only for the sake of his friendship with the English that he preferred to lose lakhs of rupees, and abolish all duties;

(iv) If the Chiefs of the factories settle disputes between his people and those of the English, his own authority would be jeopardised;

(v) There is no necessity for a Resident to stay at his court;

(vi) "Jagiri" sands can be granted for the assigned districts, if the treaty makes it obligatory;

(vii) Sarrafs, or merchants are no one's servants, and cannot be forced to accept, or refuse any particular type of sikkahs;

[39] Amyatt and Hay to Calcutta, May 26, 1763.

[40] *Ibid.*, and Beng. Pub. Cons., June 9, 1763.

(*viii*) The money collected by Muhammad Riza Khan at Chittagong has been paid to the Company;

(*ix*) His officers can be punished, only if the English agree to punish theirs; and

(*x*) The Seths will have to reside wherever the Nazim lives.

The Nawab's reply was thus tantamount to an unceremonious rejection of all the demands. By refusing[41] to consider these in a prudent and conciliatory spirit, the Nawab missed a golden opportunity of winning the good will of his opponents. The stubborn and unbending attitude which he maintained was ill-calculated to conciliate anyone, much less Amyatt and Hay. Some of their demands were neither very unjust, nor excessive, and might have been gracefully acceded to. The presence of an English Resident at his court would not have been injurious to his interests. As for jagiri sanads, it was really a formal affair. Again, he would not have lost anything by allowing the English to coin three lakhs of rupees in his mints. As regards the commander who had been guilty of unprovoked violence at Gaya, the Nawab, in the interest of his own reputation, should have readily agreed to inquire into the matter. His demand that the English should first punish their own agents was merely petulant. If he had offered to punish all those insolent and high-handed officers who wilfully obstructed English trade, he

[41] From a letter, dated April 20 or 21, 1763, from the Nawab to Mir Muhammad Mahdi Khan it appears that the former believed he would have no power left, if he were to accept the demands of Amyatt and Hay (*vide* Beng. Sel. Com., Jan. 31, 1765).

would not only have given a convincing proof of his conciliatory spirit, but he would then have been justified in requesting the Council to punish the rapacious 'gumashtahs' who had been reported to have oppressed his people. The question of the duties might also have been tactfully handled, and the method proposed for the adjustment of quarrels between his dependents, and the English agents could have been suitably modified by a friendly discussion. In short, the Nawab might have, if he had so willed, laid the foundation of an enduring friendship with the Council by negotiating an amicable compromise with its representatives, but he showed neither foresight, nor diplomacy in his discussions with Amyatt and Hay, and completely alienated their sympathy by his unyielding attitude. The arguments with which he justified his refusal to comply with the wishes of the Council indicate only his petulance and stubbornness. Firstly, he contemptuously treated the demands as "unreasonable and foreign from former treaties and grants."[42] Secondly, he complained that Amyatt and Hay were not inclined to consider his own demands.[43] Thirdly, he sarcastically referred to the futility of "setting on foot once or twice every year a new treaty,"[44] and refused to submit to a periodical revision of treaties. Fourthly, he declared to Amyatt that new demands were being put forward every month only to invent an excuse for making war on him.[45] Lastly, he declined to negotiate when, as

[42] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 46, p. 72.
[43] Trans., P.L.R., No. 49, p. 76.
[44] Trans., P.L.R., No. 50, p. 77.
[45] Trans., P.L.R., 1763, No. 23, p. 26.

he wrote to Mr. Vansittart, " . . . the Chiefs of the factories are stretching out their hands against my honour and reputation."[46]

The failure of Amyatt's mission was regrettable indeed, and it is a pity that it was partly due to the Nawab's own obstinacy and tactlessness. Far from trying to reconcile matters, he provoked Amyatt and Hay during his conferences with them by his acrimonious complaints. Ghulam Husain writing from personal knowledge, says,[47] " . . . at every meeting, the Nawab, whether by chance or otherwise, never failed to commit some action, or to be guilty of some gesture, which never failed to give offence . . . At last, the discontents ran so high that at one time Mr. Amyatt who had advanced as far as the door of the Navvab's apartment, returned back much displeased; nor would he have been brought again, had not some of the Navvab's favourites run after him, and intreated his being pacified." The Nawab was under the influence of Gurgin Khan who constantly advised him not to yield to the demands of the Council.[48] Ali Ibrahim Khan who was the best friend of the Nawab vainly requested the latter not to alienate Amyatt at the instigation of Gurgin Khan. " If your princely mind be for peace, Mr. Amyatt's heart ought not to be estranged by actions and words that derogate from the high character which our master bears,"[49] so entreated Ali Ibrahim Khan, but to no effect. The Nawab persisted

[46] Trans. P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 51, p. 80.

[47] Raymond's translation of Siyar, Cal. Reprint, II, p. 462 (*vide* Text, p. 723).

[48] Siyar, p. 724.

[49] Raymond's translation of Siyar, II, p. 464 and Text, p. 724.

in haughtily rejecting the representations of Amyatt who wrote to the Council on June 14, "He continues to treat us with the greatest slight, and we almost daily meet with insults from his people."[50] It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that Amyatt's mission failed to prevent the inevitable rupture between the Nawab and the English.

During Amyatt's stay at Monghyr certain incidents occurred which served to intensify Amyatt's estrangement from the Nawab. Almost immediately after his arrival at Monghyr, Amyatt had to complain that two gentlemen on their way to Patna had been insolently turned back[51] at Nawabganj, but the Nawab justified the action of his official on the ground that the gentlemen had been without a 'dastak.' At Monghyr itself occurred an incident which shows to what extent the Nawab could be led away by mere suspicion. Two of the Company's people who had gone into the city at night on some private business of their own were arrested, and detained till the next morning. The Nawab wrote to Amyatt saying that they must have gone to pry into the condition of his army![52] On another day, the 'gumashtah' of an English gentleman was forcibly taken to the 'Cutcherry' where, without the semblance of a trial, he was beaten with shoes, and fined. The Nawab refused to take any notice of it in spite of Amyatt's immediate complaint.[53] The matters appeared to be very serious indeed, when one morning[54] three gentlemen who had gone out for

[50] Beng. Pub. Cons., June 23, 1763.
[51] Trans., P.L.R., Apl-June, 1763, No. 9, p. 7.
[52] Trans., P.L.R., 1763, No. 19, p. 17.
[53] Trans., P.L.R., Apl.-June, 1763, No. 15, p. 15.
[54] Siyar, p. 724, Trans., P.L.R., 1763, No. 27, p. 30.

a pleasure ride were rudely stopped, and compelled to go back. On their refusal to comply with the order, the guards threatened to fire, and gratuitously insulted them in indecent language when the gentlemen decided to go back. The Nawab not only refused to punish his insolent guards, but blamed the gentlemen for having needlessly approached his quarters, and declared that as the English always attempted to bring his government into contempt, he would never give any satisfaction for this insult to the aforesaid gentlemen. Such defiance on the part of the Nawab at a time when patience, moderation, and tact alone could have averted a crisis was most inopportune.

In the meanwhile, the Nawab had committed an act which was rightly interpreted by the Council as one of open hostility.[55] On May 25, six boats laden with muskets for Patna were detained[56] at the instance of Gurgin Khan.[57] The Nawab refused to release them in spite of every representation made by Amyatt and Hay, and defended his high-handed action on a number of grounds. In the first place, he protested against the secret despatch of arms saying, "Openly to deny sending any military stores, and secretly to send them in this manner, what can it mean?"[58] This argument is hardly justified when it is known that neither Amyatt, nor the Governor had ever promised that no military stores would be sent to Patna. In the second place, the Nawab offered the excuse that the English had

[55] Beng. Pub. Cons., June 9, 1763.

[56] Amyatt and Hay to Calcutta, May 26, 1763.

[57] Siyar, p. 724.

[58] Trans., P.L.R. (Jan.-Sept.), 1763, No. 49, p. 76.

also seized his 'amils,'[59] but this was no justification for the deliberate detention of the Company's property in such a high-handed fashion. In the third place, the Nawab complained that Ellis was daily causing disturbances, and "every day keeps his forces in readiness, and creates troubles and quarrels with my people."[60] In short, the Nawab suspected that the arms were intended to be used in capturing Patna. Ali Ibrahim Khan rightly protested that "if peace was in contemplation, there was no colour for stopping the boat, and if hostilities were in view, then he saw no great harm in adding five hundred more muskets to the two thousand already in the English factory."[61] "For if we can fight against two thousand," he remonstrated with the Nawab, "I dare say, we can as well fight against two thousand five hundred." But, the Nawab was obdurate, and he paid no heed to the sincere advice of his friend. The seizure of the boats was not only an ill-advised step, but it amounted to almost a declaration of war. Even his best supporters, Messrs. Vansittart and Hastings, were constrained to admit this.[62]

While the boats were being thus forcibly detained the Nawab insisted on the removal of the Company's troops from Patna. He refused to release the boats, unless the forces were immediately withdrawn from Patna. It appears that the Nawab had always scented danger from the Company's

[59] Amyatt and Hay to Calcutta, May 31, 1763.

[60] Trans., P.L.R. (Jan.-Sept.), 1763, No. 49, p. 76.

[61] Raymond's Translation of Siyar, II, p. 465 (*vide* Text, p. 724).

[62] Beng. Pub. Cons., June 9 and 10, 1763.

troops in Bihar. The arrival of the boats offered him a good pretext for demanding their removal. The reasons given by him were highly exaggerated as usual. He informed Amyatt and Hay that he could never have any confidence in the English, unless the detachment at Patna was removed to Calcutta, or Monghyr.[63] To the Governor, he complained that the troops at Patna "create continual disturbances and quarrels with my people, and daily leave a fresh root of disaffection," and that the behaviour of the Company's troops was such as led the people to believe "that there is no longer a friendship and union between us."[64] He again wrote to the Governor on May 26, "I have no objection to two, or three hundred Englishmen remaining at Patna, but to keep up such a force with Mr. Ellis, to ruin my affairs, is very improper."[65] In his letter, dated June 19, the Nawab declared, "Mr. Ellis is my professed enemy; and for these two years has created disturbance leaving unattempted no means to ruin my affairs."[66] The Nawab pretended to ask for the withdrawal of the forces on the above grounds, but it is certain that the object he really aimed at was to wipe out all vestiges of his subjection to the English. The troops had been stationed at Patna at his own request,[67] and, there was no immediate necessity for their sudden recall. They might be removed to Monghyr, but it was not practicable immediately; besides, the Nawab

[63] Amyatt and Hay to Calcutta, May 29, 1763.
[64] Trans., P.L.R. (Jan.-Sept.), 1763, No. 46, p. 72.
[65] *Ibid.*, No. 49, p. 76; Narrative, III, p. 242.
[66] Trans., P.L.R. (Jan.-Sept.), 1763, No. 50, p. 77.
[67] Trans., P.L.R., 1762-63, No. 57, p. 59.

could not really have insisted on it, as he had his own troops at Monghyr. His design was simply to get the troops withdrawn from Patna so that the power of the English in the country might be completely undermined. It was only when the Council decided against[68] the withdrawal of the troops that the Nawab made a fresh demand that at least Ellis should be superseded by anybody else, preferably McGuire, or Hastings, or even Amyatt.[69] He also released the boats on June 19,[70] but what is extremely significant, he offered to purchase[71] the muskets.

The negotiations between Amyatt and the Nawab had in the meantime come to a standstill, as the latter's attitude was definitely hostile. The Nawab had by now actually decided upon hostilities,[72] and so he treated Amyatt and Hay virtually as prisoners,[73] and determined to keep them as hostages.[74] The latter had so far been subjected to all sorts of indignities and insults, but on June 20, the boats were again seized, and their camp was surrounded by a body of horse all night.[75] It was impossible to stay after this, and Amyatt resolved to return to Calcutta. He had waited for more than a month, but in vain. The Nawab was

[68] Beng. Pub. Cons., June 9, 1763.

[69] Trans., P.L.R. (Jan.-Sept.), 1763, No. 50, p. 77.

[70] Amyatt and Hay to Calcutta, June 19, 1763.

[71] Narrative, III, p. 303.

[72] Siyar, p. 725.

[73] Beng. Pub. Cons., July 4, 1763.

[74] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V., p. 611).

[75] Amyatt to Ellis, June 22, 1763. (From his letter-books found at Murshidabad).

determined not to satisfy any of his demands.[76] Amyatt was convinced by the latter's hostile attitude that a rupture was unavoidable.[77] Under these circumstances, there was no other alternative but to take leave of the Nawab as early as possible, but the latter was bent upon detaining Hay as a hostage for his own officers seized by the English.[78] As Hay agreed[79] to remain at Monghyr, Amyatt and his party left on June 24,[80] provided with a passport granted by the Nawab.[81]

The next morning Ellis attacked and seized Patna and the war thus commenced. This was apparently sufficient to convince the Nawab that Amyatt must have secretly instructed Ellis to begin the hostilities. In fact, the Nawab believed the capture of Patna to have been brought about at the instance of Amyatt.[82] It is, therefore, easy to account for his umbrage at the alleged treachery of the latter. It is clear from contemporary evidence that Amyatt and his party were massacred under the Nawab's own orders, although subsequently he denied having issued orders for their murder. The details of Amyatt's murder

[76] Muzaffar-Namah, Alld. Univ. MS., p. 337.

[77] Narrative, III, pp. 272-73 and 295 (*vide* letters from Amyatt and Hay received on June 13, 17 and 23).

[78] Beng. Pub. Cons., June 23, 1763.

[79] *Ibid.*

[80] Amyatt to Ellis, June 22 (from his letter-books found at Murshidabad), Diary of Surgeon Peter Campbell, June 24.

[81] Amyatt's letter, dated June 30. Beng. Pub. Cons., July 5, 1763.

[82] Siyar, p. 725. Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, p. 787; Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V., p. 611).

are obscure.[83] The facts appear to be as follows.[84] No sooner had the Nawab heard of the recapture of Patna by his troops than he issued orders to Muhammad Taqi Khan who was then encamped near Murshidabad to intercept Amyatt and his party. Muhammad Taqi Khan wanted to capture the party by a stratagem, and invited Amyatt to an entertainment. On the latter's repeated refusal to come to the shore, the boatmen were ordered to stop. Thereupon, Amyatt's party opened fire in self-defence, but were ultimately overpowered by the Nawab's people who boarded the boats, and slaughtered them mercilessly. This occurred on July 3, 1763.[85] Amyatt's head was sent to Monghyr for the Nawab's satisfaction.[86] Thus ended the ill-fated mission to Mir Qasim!

[83] For details, *vide* the following authorities: Siyar, p. 727. Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V., p. 613).

Muzaffar-Namah, p. 343. Raymond's footnote to his translation of Siyar, Vol. II, p. 476. Diary of Surgeon Anderson, Aug. 11, and also Gentil's Memoirs. Raymond's account based as it is on the report of actual eye-witnesses may be accepted as the correct version.

[84] Raymond's version is fully corroborated by Muzaffar-Namah, p. 343. *Vide* also Riyaz-us-Salatin (A.S.B. Text, p. 382).

[85] Letter from T. Motte, dated Kewganj, July 4, 1763, to Mr. Johnstone (Beng. Pub. Cons., July 7, 1763), "18th Zilhadj, 1176," according to Siyar, pp. 727-28.

[86] Siyar, p. 727. Diary of Surgeon Anderson, Aug. 6.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GENESIS OF MIR QASIM'S WAR WITH THE ENGLISH

It has often been held that the Nawab had never actually meant to break with the English, and that it was Ellis who was really responsible for the ultimate rupture. This view has been repeated so often since the day of Vansittart that it sometimes passes for a self-evident truth. Popular imagination has pictured Mir Qasim as an unfortunate martyr who fell a victim to the unrighteous greed and hostility of the English. His fate has evoked pity, and he has been regarded by many an Indian writer as a patriotic hero who nobly sacrificed his 'masnad' in defending the rights and privileges of his unhappy subjects groaning under the tyranny of the English merchants. Contemporary evidence, however, belies this popular notion, and supports the belief of the Nawab's avowed opponents who condemned him as an implacable enemy of the English. There is no doubt that the Nawab had, from the beginning, aimed at establishing his complete independence of the English, and that he patiently strove to break the supremacy which they had obtained after the revolution of 1757. His object was to establish an independent and unfettered 'Subahdari' in Bengal by reducing the extraordinary power and influence of the European traders.

Mir Jafar's dependence on the English had been galling to Mir Qasim, and as an interested spectator of the

affairs in Murshidabad, he had not failed to notice the utter subjection of the Nawab to English control. He had, what is generally lost sight of, fully learnt the anti-English designs of Miran, his rival, whose example must have created a deep and lasting impression on his mind. He was only more ingenious and artful than Miran, and knew how to proceed with his plans cautiously and with dexterity. He lacked the dashing impetuosity and military aptitude of his rival, and thus had to rely more on diplomacy and intrigue when he sought to achieve his object. The unquestioned high-handedness of the English 'gumashtahs' gave him a good pretext for attempting to put an end to the whole of the English inland trade. The violence of the Chiefs of the factories was an equally serviceable excuse for demanding the withdrawal of the Company's troops from the interior of the province. Owing to Vansittart's policy of strict non-intervention, the Nawab had already secured full autonomy in his internal administration, and had developed a large army, besides transferring his seat of government to a distant centre in Bihar. All those who had been known to have any connexion with the English, or with the late Nawab were systematically removed, punished, or even executed on some pretext. All this pointed to an unmistakable desire on the part of the Nawab to free himself from English control. Thus, a conflict between him and the English was really inevitable sooner or later!

For over two years, the Nawab had been busy with the work of administrative reorganisation and consolidation, so he could not have thought of hostilities in the meantime. He had to make his government financially solvent, before he could dream of embarking on ambitious

projects. Above all, he had to disband the existing rabble forces, and create a new and efficient army. Thus, up to the end of 1762, the Nawab was busily occupied in husbanding his financial resources, and in remodelling his army. The Nepal expedition which was undertaken early in January, 1763, was the first visible indication of the Nawab's aggressive designs. He was now in a position to put his military strength to the test. It was after his return from Bettia that he seriously contemplated hostilities with the English. He had scarcely come back to Monghyr when he sent an intermediary to the Emperor, and to the Wazir of Oudh in order to seek their alliance against the English. According to Ghulam Husain, the Nawab entrusted Mirza Shamsuddin, one of his trusted 'Wakils', with this mission.[1] As Ghulam Husain was an intimate friend of the latter, he heard from him all about this secret errand, and his information therefore is extremely valuable. Kalyan Singh also writing from personal knowledge says,[2] "He (*i.e.*, the Nawab) submitted representations to the King and the Wazir . . . praying for help." It is therefore clear[3] from the above that the Nawab had now determined on breaking with the English, and was looking for convenient allies. This is admirably illustrative of his characteristic shrewdness. He had surely realised that his struggle with the English would be both difficult and prolonged, and consequently he deemed it essential to enlist the moral and material support of the Emperor, and of his powerful Wazir.

[1] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 718).
[2] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V., p. 609).
[3] *Vide* also Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 783).

In the meantime, the Nawab was undoubtedly making secret preparations for war.[4] Mr. Chambers wrote to Mr. Batson from Cossimbazar on April 3, 1763, "It is publicly talked at the city that the Nabob is determined to get rid of us one way or other . . . Several parties of horse and foot have arrived at the city, within these two or three days, and great preparations are making for defence, in case our army comes this way . . ."[5] That the Nawab had himself ordered a movement of his troops to different places was admitted in his own letter to Mr. Amyatt, wherein he clearly stated that this was not a preparation for war, and that he was merely recalling the troops from places where they had been stationed for a long time past.[6] It was obviously a lame excuse, and thus could not satisfy Mr. Amyatt who strongly complained to the Nawab of the mysterious concentration of the latter's troops at Patna.[7] The Governor also protested against the sudden stationing of Muhammad Taqi Khan and Sheikh Haibatullah with their troops at Katwa, who were reported to have declared their intention to invade Burdwan.[8]

The capture of Patna by Ellis has usually been regarded as an extremely unjustifiable action, and he has been generally condemned for his high-handed aggression. But, the circumstances which finally led him to conclude that war was inevitable, and that an offensive alone was the best possible means of averting a disaster have not been

[4] Beng. Pub. Cons., April 1, 1763.
[5] Beng. Pub. Cons., April 12, 1763.
[6] Trans., P.L.R., 1763, No. 12, p. 8.
[7] Trans., P.L.R., April-June, 1763, No. 10, p. 8.
[8] Trans., P.L.R., 1762-3, No. 57, p. 59.

adequately stressed. A more tactful and cool-headed person than Ellis might have waited a little longer, but it is undeniable that there was sufficient evidence to show that the Nawab was bent upon driving out the English from Patna sooner or later.

The facts which could not fail to indicate the suspicious character of the Nawab's intentions may be thus analysed:—

(*i*) Immediately after the failure of his Nepal expedition, the Nawab thought it proper to remove Naubat Ray from Patna to Monghyr, and appointed in his place Mir Mahdi Khan who had so long commanded the forces in Shahabad.[9] The very appointment of one of the principal commanders as Naib at Patna was significant, and was really meant to be a warning to Ellis;

(*ii*) The new Naib, strangely enough, did not pay[10] the Chief the usual compliment of even informing him about his arrival. Evidently the Nawab did not desire even the slightest familiarity between his Naib and the Chief;

(*iii*) Scarcely had Mir Mahdi Khan arrived at Patna when it came to be reported that preparations for war were being actively made on an unprecedented scale.[11] Ellis in his

[9] Siyar, p. 718.

[10] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 18, 1763.

[11] Letter from Ellis to Mahdi Khan. Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 43, B, p. 67.

letter to the Council, dated March 5, 1763, wrote, "... he carries on the preparations for attack or defence (for as yet we know not which to call them) with more vigour than his predecessor, and thereby adds to the terror and alarm of the inhabitants ... It is commonly talked that the Nabob has sent this Mindy Cawn to drive out the English."

(*iv*) Every attempt was being made to stop all intercourse between the factory and the town. On March 4, the gates of the town were kept shut for most part of the day, and the relief of the English hospital guard was refused admittance. On a protest being made, although the guard came to be admitted, the 'Burbunna' wicket remained closed.[12] According to the author of the Muzaffar-namah, the Nawab also issued strict orders that no Englishman or his agents should be allowed to enter the fort.[13]

(*v*) Since February, the Nawab had been sending troops into Patna, and Ellis reported[14] early in March that a number of commanders in different parts of Bihar were already under orders to march to Patna. This massing of

[12] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 18, 1763.

[13] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 338).

[14] Beng. Pub. Cons., March 18, 1763, and also Letter from Ellis, dated April 5, 1763.

troops at Patna was inexplicable, because there was no immediate danger to the province;

(*vi*) The English troops in Patna were further harassed by a practical stoppage of the supply of provisions.[15] Ellis complained,[16] "The Nabob seizes all provisions coming from Bengal, and such is the scarcity here, that had it not been for the 'gunje' which so much pains was taken to abolish, we had long e'er now been obliged to take up arms to procure our daily sustenance."

(*vii*) Early in June, Ellis reported that the Nawab's agents had been secretly inducing many of the Company's sepoys to desert by promising them a higher salary in the Nawab's service.[17] As the sepoys continued to desert in large numbers, Ellis had to raise the allowances to stop these desertions;[18]

(*viii*) Encouraged by the fact of the Nawab's open estrangement from Ellis, Mahdi Ali Khan's men did not hesitate to abuse and insult the English sepoys whenever possible.[19] Mahdi

[15] Amyatt during his stay at Monghyr complained of the fact that a number of boats laden with grain and going to Patna were being detained. (Trans., P.L.R., April-June, 1763, No. 15, p. 15).

[16] Beng. Pub. Cons., May 9, 1763.

[17] Beng. Pub. Cons., June 17, 1763.

[18] *Ibid.* Letter from Ellis, dated June 6, 1763.

[19] Beng. Pub. Cons., May 9, 1763.

Ali Khan himself set a ' chauki ' on the house of a ' gumashtah ' of the Company on mere suspicion;[20]

(*ix*) The Nawab suddenly came to an understanding with Kamgar Khan against whom operations had been in progress for a long time past, and the troops so long stationed in the latter's country were ordered down to Patna where they arrived on June 5.[21] This was another proof of the fact that the Nawab was concentrating most of his scattered forces in Bihar at Patna. It is no wonder, therefore, that Messrs. Amyatt and Hay wrote in their letter to the Council, dated June 14, " It appears to us from the Nabob's disposition of his forces, both by his strengthening the detachment towards Beerboom and Moorshedabad, and his ordering to be assembled at Patna his troops from the Mey country and other places to the westward, and from what he has dropped in conversation, that he designs to attack, at the same time, both Burdwan and our forces at Patna in hope of subduing them before they can be succoured;[22]

[20] Letter from Amyatt to the Nawab, dated June 9, 1763. (Trans., P.L.R., April-June, 1763, No. 16, p. 15).

[21] Beng. Pub. Cons., June 17, 1763.

[22] Beng. Pub. Cons., June 23, 1763.

(*x*) The detention at Monghyr of the boats laden with arms for the Company's troops at Patna must have further deepened the suspicions of Ellis, and the demand for his recall from Patna along with most of the sepoys indicated an unusual defiance on the part of the Nawab. Under the circumstances, the Council decided, on June 9, to direct the gentlemen at Patna to be upon their guard, and act as they might be advised by Messrs. Amyatt and Hay.[23] This point is too important to be lost sight of. It is clear that Ellis was definitely instructed by the Council to be prepared for any sudden emergency.

Being convinced therefore that war was imminent, Ellis had been making every preparation for the coming rupture. This was reported to the Nawab in exaggerated terms by Mahdi Ali Khan and others, and the Nawab conveniently adopted it as a good pretext for augmenting his own forces at Patna. The Nawab magnified in all his letters to the Governor the alleged bellicose preparations of Ellis; and explained away his own preparations for war. On June 19, the Nawab wrote, "With respect to Mr. Ellis, how shall I speak, or how shall I write what quarrels he has made with my people from the beginning, and how he has injured my affairs? Now, he is every day making preparations against Meer Mahomed Mehdee Cawn, and making a

[23] Beng. Pub. Cons., June 9, 1763.

show of his forces before him, and is ready to attack him. In this case, I and my people are without remedy."[24] A few days afterwards, the Nawab again wrote in similar style, "As to the particulars of Mr. Ellis, what shall I write? Daily he is seeking occasion to quarrel with Meer Mahomed Mehdee Cawn, and now by what I can learn, that gentleman is bent upon the design of assaulting the fort of Patna."[25] The Nawab enclosed certain papers[26] of news to justify his allegations against Ellis. It is easy to criticise Ellis on the basis of the Nawab's representations alone, but it must be admitted that the Nawab's own preparations and activities compelled Ellis to take measures in self-defence. The Nawab bitterly complained against Ellis with the object of justifying the hostilities which he had lately decided upon[27] at the instance of Gurgin Khan.

On May 26, the Nawab wrote in a threatening mood, "However desirous I am of avoiding the worst, yet I see no means of it, and my patience is near exhausted."[28] On June 19, he similarly threatened, "It is a duty on every man to defend his own honour."[29] Again, on June 22, he reminded[30] the Governor, "Since the Chiefs of the factories are stretching out their hands against my honour and reputation, I and my people are in every respect without

[24] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 50, p. 77.

[25] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 51, p. 80.

[26] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, Nos. 51A, 51B, 51C, 51D, 51E, pp. 82—4.

[27] Siyar, p. 725.

[28] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 49, p. 76.

[29] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 50, p. 77.

[30] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 51, p. 80.

remedy, nor is it in my power to use any longer forbearance." Could anything be more expressive than such successive threats? Above all, the fiery words[31] of Mahdi Ali Khan, "If that Chief is determined on a quarrel, I will put up with no more insults, but will fight with him," were intended to be an ultimatum, and must have been inspired by his master. Dr. Fullarton who was an eye-witness of the affairs at Patna says that preparations of war were carried on with great vigour inside the fort from the 17th of June.[32] Ellis was thus hardly unjustified in making counter-preparations to defend the factory.

Ellis directed the attack against Patna on the 25th of June,[33] and thus commenced the war which ended in the downfall of the Nawab. Simply because Ellis decided to strike the first blow, he has been accused of deliberately forcing a war on the unwilling Nawab. The latter too declared subsequently, "Although I have in no respect intended any breach of public faith, yet Mr. Ellis regarding not treaties, or engagements, in violation of public faith, proceeded against me with treachery and night-assaults."[34] Mr. Vansittart too argues in his Narrative that Ellis was responsible for the war, and that it could have been prevented.[35] "My own opinion is," he says,[36] "that

[31] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 51A, p. 82.

[32] Fullarton's Narrative (Beng. Pub. Cons., Dec. 19, 1763).

[33] *Ibid.*, and Diaries of Surgeons Anderson and Peter Campbell, June 25, 1763.

[34] Letter from the Nawab to Major Adams, dated Sept. 9, 1763 (Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 53, p. 85).

[35] Vansittart's Narrative, III, p. 388.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 387.

Mr. Ellis's intention was, from the beginning, to break with the Nawab." Howsoever morally unjustifiable the attack against Patna may have been, the action of Ellis, when closely examined in the light of the actual circumstances, admits of some explanation. It is true that by commencing the hostilities himself he needlessly laid himself open to the charge of treachery or foul play, and that a more prudent person would have waited till the Nawab's people took the offensive, but in fairness to Ellis, it must be admitted that peculiarly placed as he was, he considered an offensive alone to be the only safe course under the existing circumstances. His was probably an error of judgment, which in that critical moment was difficult to avoid.

Ellis was fully aware of the active preparations of war[37] going on in the fort, and he had also been convinced by other circumstances that the Nawab meant war. His decision to capture Patna by surprise was, therefore, not due to a sudden whim. The question arises, "What led Ellis

[37] This was proved by certain letters written by the Nawab to Mahdi Ali Khan, which had been discovered after the fall of Patna (*vide* Beng. Sel. Com., Jan. 31, 1765). The following may be cited:—

(*i*) A letter, dated 11th Ramzan, 1176 (Mar. 30 or 31, 1763) which contained an account of the Nawab's plans against the English.

(*ii*) A letter, dated 3rd Shawwal, 1176 (April 20 or 21, 1763) which contained instructions for the arrest of Ellis.

(*iii*) A letter, dated 9th Zilhijj, 1176 (June 21 or 22, 1763) ordering the commencement of war.

(*iv*) A letter, dated 13th Zilhijj, 1176 (June 26 or 27, 1763) directing Mahdi Ali to capture, or kill Ellis.

to decide upon an attack?" The facts that appear to have finally determined the decision were the following:—

(*i*) The Council had decided on June 9 to instruct Messrs. Amyatt and Hay that they should before departing from Monghyr direct the gentlemen at Patna "to act in the manner they judge most proper for their own security, in case the Nabob marches, or sends any troops to attack them."[38] It is certain, therefore, that Amyatt must have given the aforesaid warning to Ellis. The former wrote to the Council on June 14, "The last time we were with the Nabob, he told us that peace, or war depended on the removing our troops from Patna."[39] Naturally, he must have written similarly to Ellis.

(*ii*) Amyatt wrote in cypher both to Ellis and to the Council on June 21, that he and his party had virtually been made prisoners, and that his boats had been seized.[40] Ellis must have concluded, therefore, that war might be declared any moment!

(*iii*) It was definitely known at Patna on the 23rd June[41] that Amyatt's negotiations had been broken off, and war was consequently

[38] Beng. Pub. Cons., June 9, 1763.

[39] Beng. Pub. Cons., June 23, 1763.

[40] Beng. Pub. Cons., July 4, 1763.

[41] Surgeon Anderson's Diary, June 23, 1763, and Surgeon Peter Campbell's Diary of the same date.

imminent. It had been understood from the beginning that the success of Amyatt's negotiations alone could avert hostilities, hence the news of the failure of the latter's mission could only mean war.

(*iv*) On the 24th June, a message was received[42] in the evening that Amyatt had left for Calcutta the same day, leaving Hay as a hostage at Monghyr. Matters were thus critical indeed!

(*v*) On the 21st June, the Nawab suddenly ordered[43] a large force under an Armenian officer, Marcat,[44] to march to Patna. This was what influenced Ellis most. The news of the march of about six regiments[45] to Patna was sufficient to convince him that the Nawab intended to attack the English at Patna. In this connexion, the opinion that Major Adams gave in the Council on April 14, is worth quoting, ". . . . should the Nabob march a large force towards Patna, without any apparent reason, or otherwise commit any act of hostility, they (*i.e.*, the gentlemen at Patna) should take any step for their own security, even to the taking of the city of

[42] Surgeon Peter Campbell's Diary, June 24, 1763.

[43] Beng. Pub. Cons., July 5, 1763 (Letter from Amyatt, dated June 25, 1763).

[44] Beng. Pub. Cons., July 5, 1763.
Gentil's Memoirs, p. 211.

[45] Siyar, p. 727, and Muzaffar-namah, p. 340.

> Patna . . . ."[46] It is clear, therefore, that Ellis followed the instructions of Major Adams in surprising Patna, when he heard about the approach of Marcat at the head of a big army.

The only other alternatives[47] open to Ellis were, either to wait till the factory was actually threatened by the Nawab's troops, or to leave it beforehand. That the first course was fraught with the greatest danger will be readily admitted. The factory could hardly be defended, if it were to be besieged by the enemy. Moreover, the intelligence of a formal declaration of war could never reach Patna in time to enable Ellis to take the offensive with any advantage. The second alternative was equally objectionable. Firstly, the abandonment of the factory would have affected the morale of the sepoys, and might have encouraged further desertions. Secondly, the magazine lay in the lower part of the house, and could be blown up by a common rocket. Thirdly, the hospital and the sick lay within the town and could not be sacrificed, their immediate removal being out of the question, even if it were permitted. Fourthly, the supply of provisions being scarce, and almost cut off, it would have been difficult to hold out till the arrival of reinforcements. Fifthly, Ellis was at the time hard pressed for money, and he had hardly sufficient funds to meet the demands of the troops. Finally, desertions were continuing, and it was found impossible to stop these

[46] Beng. Pub. Cons., April 14, 1763.

[47] Beng. Pub. Cons., May 9, 1763.
(Letter from Ellis to the Council).

without an increment in the allowances. For all these reasons, Ellis deemed it impolitic and suicidal to remain on the defensive in the ill-fortified factory, and ultimately decided to seize the city. "Our distance from Calcutta is very great, and whenever the Nabob marches this way, our communications will be cut off, and most probably not opened but by your army. If, therefore, we should obey nature's first law, we hope we shall not be found culpable, though it may not perfectly coincide with your orders." Thus replied[48] Ellis to the Council protesting against its resolution of April 14, which made it obligatory on him to remain on the defensive, until he had received notice of war from the Council.

There is satisfactory evidence[49] to prove that the Nawab did decide upon war after the failure of his negotiations with Mr. Vansittart, although he had undeniably hesitated earlier. Mr. Vansittart's contention[50] that the Nawab was inclined to peace till Ellis's attack on Patna is absolutely untenable. In short, the Nawab seriously thought of, and prepared for war after his treaty with Mr. Vansittart had been disapproved by the Council. Messrs. Amyatt and Hay wrote to the Council from Monghyr on May 18, "We had a good deal of conversation with him

[48] Beng. Pub. Cons., May 9, 1763.

[49] Siyar, pp. 724-5.
Riyaz-us-Salatin (A.S.B. Text, p. 382).
Muzaffar-namah, p. 338.
Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, pp. 785-7.
Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V., p. 609).

[50] Vansittart's Narrative, III, p. 389.

on different subjects, in which it appeared he had considered himself as in a state of war with us for some time past, and had issued orders, and made preparations accordingly. . . "[51]

The account of Ghulam Husain who was present at the Nawab's court during this period makes it abundantly clear that there were two rival parties[52] in the court—one headed by the Nawab's closest friend, Ali Ibrahim Khan, who strongly advocated peace and friendship with the English, and the other was represented by the Armenian commander, Gurgin Khan, who prevailed on the Nawab to welcome hostilities, and thus establish his independence of the English. After a good deal of hesitation, the Nawab adopted the counsel of the war party, and banished all thoughts of peace from his mind.[53] In resolving upon hostilities, he appears to have had a number of objects in his view. It may here be pointed out that the dispute in regard to the duties on private inland trade was neither the sole, nor even a principal cause of his war with the English. He had wider, and more ambitious designs, when he finally determined to go to war.

In the first place, he was from the very beginning bent on freeing himself[54] from the control of the English. He had closely watched the dramatic rise of the English as the supreme power in the country after 1757, and had witnessed the utter subordination of his predecessor to

[51] Beng. Pub. Cons., May 30, 1763.

[52] Siyar, p. 724.

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 725.

[54] Verelst's View, etc., p. 47.

the latter. This position he intended to change either by diplomacy, or war. He disdained to be bound, hand and foot, to the English alliance, as his father-in-law had been. By sheer diplomacy, he had been able to win from the well-meaning Governor a degree of freedom which his predecessor could never have dreamt of under Clive. It was, however, the question of the private inland trade of the Company's servants, which unexpectedly hastened the inevitable clash of interests between the Nawab and the English. The former realised that a successful war alone could vindicate his dignity, and independence. In the second place, he aimed at ruining the whole private inland trade of the English, but his motive was entirely political. The question of the duties was not only secondary, but was immaterial too. It was the privileged position of the English merchants that was galling to him, and he regarded their private commercial activities as a serious menace[55] to his authority. He believed that unless the inland trade of the English happened to be completely stopped, the gentlemen of the factories and their insolent 'gumashtahs' would ultimately reduce the authority of his government to nothingness. Backed by the Company's military force, their trade appeared to be a grave danger to his internal administration, hence nothing short of an entire abolition of the private trade of the English could have satisfied him. In the third place, he was determined to avenge himself on Ellis whom he proclaimed as his worst enemy, and whose consistent opposition to himself aroused his bitterest

[55] Letter from the Nawab, dated Feb. 26, 1763 (Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 22, p. 23).

rancour and hatred.[56] In fact, the vindictive Nawab seems to have welcomed a rupture with the English more out of personal spite against Ellis and others who had condemned his elevation and had opposed him throughout, than from any other motive. In the fourth place, he looked upon war as the only means of obtaining a heavy indemnity[57] for his alleged losses due to the rapacity of the English 'gumashtahs.' In the fifth place, he was eager to recover the districts of Burdwan, Midnapur, and Chittagong, which he had ceded to the Company after his accession to the ' masnad.' The loss of these important districts must have rankled in his heart, and he only awaited a suitable opportunity for demanding[58] their restitution with their rents for three years. Lastly, the Nawab appears to have cherished the hope of driving out the English from the country.[59]

The war between the English and Mir Qasim was the inevitable sequel to the revolution of 1757, and it resulted from the latter's vain attempt to undo the effects of the

[56] Letter from the Nawab, dated June 19, 1763 (Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 50, p. 77).

[57] Vansittart's Narrative, III, p. 331.

[58] Letter from the Nawab, dated June 28, 1763.
(Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept., 1763, No. 52, p. 84).

[59] Muzaffar-namah, p. 344.
Riyaz-us-Salatin, p. 382.
Beng. Pub. Cons., Jan. 17, 1763.
" " " Feb. 15, 1763.
" " " Feb. 22, 1763.
" " " April 1, 1763.
" " " April 12, 1763.
" " " July 4, 1763.

revolution, and restore the '*status quo*.' The real point at issue was whether the English could have suffered themselves to be relegated to the position they had occupied till the time of Sirajuddaulah. If the Nawab had been content to play the rôle of an indolent pleasure-seeker like his predecessor, the final trial of strength between the English and the Bengal government would only have been postponed. But, Mir Qasim was an ambitious ruler keen on establishing himself as an independent Nawab, and this obviously meant an unavoidable conflict with the English whose predominance was a settled fact after the rise of Mir Jafar. From the beginning, the Nawab had assiduously sought to get rid of the English domination in Bengal, and had prepared for war knowing it to be certain, but he needed only a fair pretext for it, and this was supplied by the hostile attitude of the Council in regard to the question of the English inland trade, and the attack on Patna by Ellis.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DOWNFALL OF MIR QASIM

Mir Qasim had long prepared[1] for a rupture with the English, and he welcomed it in an exultant mood[2] after Ellis's attack on Patna in the hope of vindicating his right to a complete independence of the English. His quick recovery of Patna evidently led him to expect an easy triumph over his opponents, and he believed the hour of his deliverance from the English control to be near at hand. With his peculiar vindictiveness, he hastened to celebrate his victory at Patna by ordering a general massacre of Englishmen wherever found.[3] Little did he foresee that his exultation was to be short-lived, and that within a few months he would be expelled from the country bag and baggage! At the outset he had apparently everything in his favour. He had a huge army at his disposal, and this was numerically superior to that of the English. As regards the sinews of war, he had been able to hoard a fabulous amount of treasure in jewels and specie, a part of which he carried away with himself[4] was estimated at about

[1] Verelst's View, etc., p. 47.

[2] Trans., P.L.R., Jan.-Sept. 1763, No. 52, p. 84.

[3] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 727).
Riyaz (A.S.B. Text, p. 382).
Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 791).
Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V., p. 613).

[4] Siyar, p. 733.

five millions sterling.[5] Thus, the Nawab must have embarked on hostilities with every hope of success, but his downfall was complete before long. His army belied all his fond expectations, and his hopes were rudely shattered. His fall happened to be as dramatic as his rise had been. The failure of Mir Qasim's attempt to overthrow the power of the English was not due to mere chance, but was the result of a multiplicity of circumstances which are too significant to be lost sight of.

The Nawab was lacking in soldierly talents, and so he could not either lead his forces in person, or inspire it with courage and enthusiasm by his presence on the battlefield. He never actually dared to hazard his own person in any of the battles that his army had to fight with the English. How far his absence from the battle-field was due to sheer timidity and cowardice, or to excessive apprehension of treachery on the part of his officers is difficult to ascertain. The fact remains that he was no soldier himself, and was thus unable to keep the military staff in check, and co-ordinate their efforts in a judicious manner. A mercenary army officered by unenterprising and selfish men might have had a chance of success, only if it had been led and directed by a supreme military genius. The Nawab always kept himself at a safe distance from the field of action, and was never in a position therefore to control his men properly and adequately. Being abnormally suspi-

[5] Governor Verelst's letter, dated Calcutta, April 5, 1769 (*vide* "A Short Review of the British Government in India," 1790, p. 76). *Vide* also Ninth Report from the Select Committee, 1783, p. 54.

cious, he refused to entrust the supreme command to anyone. The consequence was that the operations were both ill-planned and ill-directed. Even Gurgin Khan was not allowed[6] to command the army in person, lest he should turn a traitor! There was no unity of command in the Nawab's army, and the officers in the absence of a strict control failed to co-operate with each other.

The Nawab's army was further handicapped for want of a sufficient number of really efficient and faithful generals. Except Muhammad Taqi Khan, or Najaf Khan there was nobody else who could distinguish himself on the battle-field. Most of the officers quarrelled among themselves, and magnified their own petty jealousies when they should have looked only to their master's interests. At Katwa, Taqi Khan was wilfully hampered by Sayyid Muhammad Khan who was extremely envious[7] of the former's reputation and talents. The officers who had been sent from Monghyr to co-operate with Taqi Khan were equally jealous of the latter, and wanted his defeat and ruin. They practically gave no assistance to Taqi Khan, and deliberately kept themselves at a distance[8] during the commencement of the battle. Taqi Khan fought with a remarkable gallantry till he was killed by a stray bullet which passed through his forehead. The panic-stricken troops fled after his death, and the refractory commanders who had so long watched the battle like passive spectators

[6] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 347).

[7] Siyar, p. 729.

[8] „ p. 730.

were among the first to run away.[9] There was the same lack of co-operation at the battle of Sooty,[10] while at Udanala the officers and troops showed not only an over-bearing spirit,[11] but were also criminally negligent.[12] Barring Najaf Khan, the rest of the commanders passed their time in[13] merry-making and unworthy dissipation. In short, the record of Mir Qasim's military staff during the war was extremely inglorious, and at the hour of trial the host of adventurers whom the Nawab had welcomed were found wanting. They proved to be too selfish to be of any use to their employer.

The Nawab's own suspicious nature was partly responsible for his undoing. He could never trust anybody, and was ever apprehensive of treachery. This is one of the reasons why he failed to inspire his subordinates with a genuine loyalty or devotion. The murder of Gurgin Khan, the Commander-in-Chief, at his own instance is an illustration of his extreme suspicion. He was given to understand that the Armenian general was secretly conspiring with the English in order to betray him.[14] This was enough to convince the Nawab of the guilt of his Commander-in-Chief, and he determined to put him to death

[9] Siyar, p. 731.

[10] „ pp. 732-33.

[11] „ p. 734.

[12] „ p. 736.

[13] „ p. 737, and Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., VI, p. 126).

[14] It appears, however, that some other Armenian officers in the Nawab's service such as Marcat and Arratoon received secret instructions from Khwajah Petruse to "direct their steps towards the good of the English." (*Vide* Beng. Pub. Cons., Nov. 21, 1763).

immediately.[15] Half-way[16] between Monghyr and Patna, Gurgin Khan was murdered by a common trooper who had approached him on the pretext of complaining of the smallness of his salary just received by him.[17] It was a serious blunder indeed. The Nawab thus deprived himself of the services of his most efficient general without caring to investigate the malicious report against him. Gurgin Khan had been sincerely devoted to the cause of his master, and had never thought of betraying or leaving him. His death was an irreparable loss to the Nawab. Gentil who knew him intimately, and had served under him writes, "... I never observed the slightest infidelity on his part," although, he goes on to say, "The English had proposals made to him to leave the Nawab." Another contemporary writer, Thomas Khojamall, an Armenian, relates how Gurgin Khan had consistently refused to betray

[15] Gentil's Memoirs, pp. 217—235. Gentil who was an eye-witness of the murder has left a graphic account of it. (*Vide* also Riyaz, p. 385).

[16] Between Shahbazgarhi and Nawabganj. (*Vide* Beng. Pub. Cons., Oct. 10, 1763).

[17] Gentil's Memoirs, pp. 217—235. Siyar, p. 739. Ghulam Husain's version is not accurate. Raymond writes, "As to the Moguls murmuring for their pay, as pretends our author (*i.e.*, Ghulam Husain), their plea must have been a fictitious one; for the author himself says that the army had been mustered and paid a week before." (Siyar, Translation by Raymond, Calcutta Reprint, II, p. 502, footnote No. 267). As a matter of fact, Gentil makes it quite clear that the Mughal trooper did not actually demand his pay, but only pretended to complain of its smallness. Ghulam Husain again does not suggest that the Nawab himself was responsible for the murder. The account given in the Riyaz (p. 385) is more explicit. Raymond fully corroborates Gentil's version. There is no doubt about the fact that the Nawab himself had brought about the murder of his innocent general on mere suspicion.

his master in spite of the fact "that the English secretly wrote and asked him to make a prisoner of the Nawab, for which he would be handsomely rewarded."[18]

It seems Gurgin Khan had earned the Nawab's displeasure by proposing[19] an accommodation between him and Mir Jafar. Besides, he had always behaved well to the English prisoners, and this was another circumstance which must have accentuated the Nawab's suspicion.[20] Gurgin Khan was not the only one who fell a victim to the Nawab's inordinate suspicion. There were forty more who shared his fate along with him on this occasion.[21] If there was anyone who could have stood the Nawab in good stead during his adversity, it was without doubt Gurgin Khan. After the death of Taqi Khan and Gurgin Khan, there was no other outstanding genius in the army, who could have turned the scale against the English.

The English had to encounter an army about four times as large as their own, yet they obtained successive victories[22] at Katwa, Murshidabad, Gheria, Sooty, Udanala, Monghyr and Patna. In fact, the Nawab's troops in spite of superior numbers were decidedly inferior to those of the

[18] *Vide* Indian Historical Records Commission Proceedings, Vol. X, p. 113.

[19] Surgeon Anderson's Diary, Aug. 31, 1763.

[20] Beng. Pub. Cons., Oct. 10, 1763. Adams wrote on Sept. 9, ". . . the Moguls were induced to affront and assault Coja Gregore by Cossim Aly Cawn, who began to be very jealous of him on account of his good behaviour to the English." *Vide* also his letter, dated Oct. 3.

[21] *Ibid.* Adams got this information through a 'harkarah' from the Nawab's camp.

[22] Beng. Pub. Cons., Sept. 5, 8, 19, etc.

English, and were lacking in proper discipline and loyalty which alone could have enabled a purely mercenary force to have any chance of success. Composed as it was of heterogeneous elements, and being only recently recruited and trained, the Nawab's army could be no match for the highly disciplined forces of the Company. Ghulam Husain has needlessly sneered at Gurgin Khan's vain attempt to enforce the same strict discipline that was known to the English troops, and has sarcastically referred to the fable of the crow that foolishly attempted to emulate the linnet.[23] It appears that after their rout at Udanala the Nawab's troops got completely demoralised, and it was futile to carry on the hostilities with such an army. Ghulam Husain who was an eye-witness found them openly disobedient and insolent, and he opines that such conduct was natural after the recent adverse turn of affairs.[24] Desertions had already commenced,[25] and the force quickly lost all confidence in itself after a few reverses.

The Nawab lacked the patience and tenacity of a leader and there is no doubt that after the very first defeat at Katwa, he lost his balance,[26] and became unusually overwhelmed with grief and anxiety. The news of each subsequent disaster added to his nervousness,[27] and made him more and more anxious[28] for his own safety and that

[23] Siyar, p. 738.
[24] ,, p. 734.
[25] Surgeon Anderson's Diary, Aug. 13, and Sept. 29, 1763.
[26] Muzaffar-namah, p. 347.
[27] Siyar, p. 738.
[28] Surgeon Anderson's Diary, Sept. 29, 1763.

of the ladies of his family, whom he had sent[29] to Rohtas immediately after the death of Taqi Khan. After the rout of his troops at Udanala, the Nawab became utterly dispirited[30] and panic-stricken, and thought only of escaping with his life and honour. The panicky state of the Nawab's own camp could hardly have raised the hopes of anybody, and it was openly rumoured that the Nawab had not taken his food for three days.[31] The latter had not the courage to hold out at Monghyr, and precipitately left for Patna where in a frenzy of rage he ordered the English prisoners to be butchered as soon as he heard[32] of the fall of Monghyr. The fall of a ruler who knew not how to face defeat calmly and bravely is hardly surprising. Instead of coolly putting up with his misfortune, he exhibited from the beginning an unworthy nervousness which must have chilled the ardour of his followers. In his hour of adversity, the Nawab did not evince the slightest courage which could have redeemed his lack of military talents.

The extreme insecurity of the Nawab's position was further enhanced by the fact that he had entrusted the command of the principal centres—Murshidabad, Dacca Monghyr, Purnea, and Patna—to weak and unreliable people. Not one of them cared to offer more than mere nominal resistance, and the result was that these places fell

[29] Siyar, p. 733.
Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., VI, p. 124).

[30] Siyar, p. 739.
Riyaz, p. 385.

[31] Surgeon Anderson's Diary, Sept. 24, 1763.

[32] Siyar, p. 739.
Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., VI, p. 128).

easily into the hands of the English. The loss of these places not only shattered the waning prestige of the Nawab, but ultimately forced him to seek refuge in Oudh. Deprived of the important cities which had been the visible symbols of his power, the Nawab could not have long held out in the country. Murshidabad was abandoned by its pusillanimous Naib, Sayyid Muhammad Khan, without the least opposition, and he fled from the town in precipitate haste just to save his own skin.[33] Mir Jafar was, therefore, triumphantly escorted to his capital, and easily seated on the 'masnad' again.[34] The successful restoration of Mir Jafar on the 'masnad' of Murshidabad was a serious blow to the influence of Mir Qasim. Dacca was also easily captured, and Mir Jafar appointed Muhammad Riza Khan as his own Naib there.[35] Thus, on the very outbreak of war, Mir Qasim was deprived of his hold over a large part of the country, simply because Dacca and Murshidabad had not been adequately safeguarded or defended. After the disaster of Udanala, the Nawab was too panic-stricken to hold out in his own capital which he left in charge of Arab Ali Khan,[36] a native of Baghdad. The latter was a despicable coward,[37] and he treacherously capitulated to

[33] Siyar, p. 731, and Riyaz, p. 384.
Trans., P.L.I., July-Dec., 1763, No. 14, p. 8.

[34] Siyar, p. 731, and Muzaffar-namah, p. 349.
Trans., P.L.I., July-Dec., 1763, No. 10, p. 6.

[35] Muzaffar-namah, p. 349.
Trans., P.L.I., July-Dec., 1763, No. 16, p. 9.

[36] Siyar, p. 738. According to Khulasat, "Izzat Khan." (J.B.O.R.S., VI, p. 128).

[37] Siyar, p. 738.

Adams soon after the latter had besieged Monghyr.[38] The surrender of Monghyr meant an unspeakable loss to the Nawab whose ruin was now almost complete. Purnea, ill-guarded as it was, fell into the hands of an unscrupulous adventurer, Mir Ruh-ud-din Husain Khan, who had managed to make his escape from Monghyr during the Nawab's flight for Patna.[39] He took possession of the place without the least opposition, and issued a proclamation in the name of Mir Jafar who recognised him as his Faujdar.[40] Patna too had been placed in the hands of incompetent persons who fled in utter panic as soon as the walls happened to be breached.[41] Mir Muhammad Ali Khan, the commandant, surrendered unconditionally, and was rewarded with a pension of Rs. 500.[42] The fall of Patna completed the downfall of Mir Qasim who had now no other option but to escape with his life from his 'subah.'

Mir Qasim had not only to fight against the English, he had also to contend against his own father-in-law's authority. The Council decided[43] on July 4, 1763, to restore Mir Jafar, and, on July 7,[44] proclaimed him Subahdar of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. The English then caried on the war ostensibly on behalf of the old Nawab.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 741.

[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 735-6, and Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., VI, pp. 125-6).

[40] Trans., P.L.R., July-Dec., 1763, No. 21, p. 15.

[41] Siyar, p. 742, Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., VI, p. 129) and Trans., P.L.R., July-Dec., 1763, No. 44, p. 35.

[42] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., VI, p. 129).

[43] Beng. Pub. Cons., July 4, 1763.

[44] Beng. Pub. Cons., July 7, 1763.

A proclamation[45] was issued to the zemindars and other important people of the country calling upon them[46] to assist their rightful Nawab in overthrowing Mir Qasim. This caused an inevitable reaction against the latter. Mir Qasim lost the support of the zemindars and other influential people who were quick to realise the utility of bowing to the rising sun.[47] Mir Jafar was made to accompany the English forces up to Patna, and this undoubtedly tended to weaken Mir Qasim's influence over his people. The author of the Muzaffar-namah relates how the Nawab became extremely depressed when he heard about the coming of Mir Jafar along with the old nobles like Raja Dulab Ram, and congratulated many of his courtiers on the restoration of their old master by way of taunting them.[48] Mir Qasim had not been unreasonably alarmed at the prompt restoration of the late Nawab. Many of his adherents who had been wavering in their loyalty to him prepared to flock to the standard of Mir Jafar, and the zemindars stopped the payment of revenue. New officers were quickly appointed to restore order and collect the revenues on behalf of the old Nawab.[49] The establishment of a parallel government in Mir Jafar's name during the progress of the war

[45] Trans., P.L.I., 1762-3, No. 60, p. 63.

[46] Vansittart's Narrative, III, p. 328.

[47] Muzaffar-namah, p. 346.

[48] *Ibid.*, pp. 346-7 (Ghulam Husain does not mention this).

The principal officials like Jasarat Khan left the Nawab's service to offer allegiance to Mir Jafar (*vide* Tarikh-i-Nusratjangi, A.S.B. Text, p. 135, etc.

[49] Muzaffar-namah, pp. 348-9.

Trans., P.L.I., July-Dec., 1763, Nos. 11, 17, 19, 23, 32, etc., pp. 7—22.

completely undermined the foundations of Mir Qasim's sway in the country. The latter had to depend entirely on his own immediate resources, as he was cut off from the rest of the country which rendered allegiance to his rival. After the proclamation of Mir Jafar as Subahdar, Mir Qasim's cause was at once rendered dubious. He was apparently in the position of a rebel against the lawful ruler of the country, and this circumstance was partly responsible for the speedy collapse of his power.

During his short rule, Mir Qasim had alienated the sympathy of all the important people in the country by his ruthless oppression and cruelty. There was hardly any influential person left whom he had not either maltreated, or imprisoned. Those who had been reputed for their wealth were invariably persecuted. The Nawab had confiscated their wealth, and put them into prison on any plausible pretext. Others who had been attached to the late Nawab met with the same fate. Thus, in the course of about three years, the Nawab had succeeded in ruining almost all the principal persons whom he distrusted for some reason, or other. Not even the zemindars could escape the tyranny of the Nawab who confined a number of them at Monghyr as prisoners. The exact number of such political prisoners cannot be ascertained, but there is no doubt that it was very large,[50] and all of them were inhumanly killed at the time of the Nawab's flight from Monghyr. Ramnarayan, Rajballabh, and many others were

[50] Siyar, p. 734.
Riyaz, pp. 383—5.
Muzaffar-namah, p. 330, etc.
Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., VI, pp. 124-5.

drowned in the Ganges with bags of sand fastened to their necks,[51] while the Seths were shot[52] by Samroo near Barh.[53] These assassinations were, it may be added in this connexion, followed by the cold-blooded massacre[54] of the

[51] Siyar, p. 734.
Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., VI, p. 125).
Surgeon Anderson's Diary, Aug. 15, 16, 17 and 19.
Surgeon Peter Campbell's Diary, Aug. 16.

[52] This is the version of Gentil, who wrote from personal knowledge, and may therefore be relied upon. (Gentil's Memoirs, p. 226). It is in a way supported by all other sources like Siyar, Khulasat, Muzaffar-namah, Riyaz, Surgeon Anderson's Diary, and Beng. Pub. Cons., Oct. 26, 1763. (Letter from Adams, dated Oct. 18).

Raymond alone refers to the popular belief of those days to the effect that the Seths were drowned at Monghyr. (His translation of Siyar, Calcutta Reprint, II, p. 504, footnote 269). Such a belief may have been due to the fact that most of the Indian prisoners had actually been drowned at Monghyr.

We learn from Gentil that the Seths were suspected of having instigated the English opposition, and of having undertaken to defray the whole expense for the Company's war against the Nawab. They were put in irons as traitors, and were shot with a pistol by Samroo under the orders of the Nawab, in spite of their offer of four crores of rupees for pardon.

[53] According to Siyar (p. 739), the murder took place in the town of Barh itself. But, according to all other authorities it occurred in a village (" Chandi," according to Khulasat) near Barh. From Major Grant's evidence before the House of Commons, we learn that the Seths were buried in a house near Barh, their bodies having originally been exposed to beasts and birds of prey.

[54] Fullarton's Narrative, Surgeon Anderson's Diary, Beng. Pub. Cons., Oct. 26, 1763, (Letter from Adams, dated Oct. 18), Gentil's Memoirs, p. 228, Muzaffar-namah, Siyar, Khulasat, Raymond's footnote (No. 270) to his translation of the Siyar (Calcutta Reprint, II, p. 505), etc., may be referred to for details. *Vide* also Vansittart's Narrative, III, p. 396.

For details regarding the actual victims, *vide* Sir Evan Cotton's illuminating article on the "Patna Massacre of 1763" (Bengal Past and Present, Vol. XLI, pp. 1—29). Beveridge's article on the same subject may also be consulted. (Calcutta Review, Vol. LXXIX, Oct., 1884).

English prisoners at Patna. It cannot be denied that the ruthless Nawab had thus prepared the way for his downfall by his own savage tyranny and bloody administration.[55] The cruelties that he had systematically perpetrated from the very commencement of his rule were bound to create a general hatred for the Nawab, and this is why the latter lost the moral support of all those who were of any importance in the country. His ruin did not excite the pity of anyone, and people were relieved to hear of his overthrow. But for the discontent that prevailed in the country against Mir Qasim, the latter could not have been driven out at least so quickly as it actually happened to be. The Nawab had made himself thoroughly unpopular, and it is not strange that his cause failed to evoke any enthusiasm, when the hour of his nemesis dawned. His brief régime was too frightful to have merited the least popular sympathy. The mainstay of his power had been his mercenary army, and when this broke down, his ruin was inevitable.

It has usually been supposed that the Wazir of Oudh, and Shah Alam espoused the cause of the fugitive Nawab after the latter's escape to Oudh, and together invaded Bengal with the object of restoring him to the 'masnad' of Bengal. But, this view is untenable. Their attack on Bengal bad only been pretended in the beginning to be in favour of Mir Qasim who was foolish enough to finance their selfish enterprise, and even this hollow pretence was given up after the latter's arrest and imprisonment by the Wazir—a fact which has generally been overlooked. The

[55] Muzaffar-namah, p. 303.

battle of Buxar shattered the ambition of Shuja-ud-daulah alone; neither Shah Alam who was ill at ease under the irksome control of his titular minister, nor Mir Qasim who was a disgraced prisoner was really concerned.

Mir Qasim had long been looking for an alliance with the Wazir and the Emperor, and he at last went over to them to seek their assistance in regaining the 'masnad' of Bengal. Little did he anticipate the designs of the Wazir who simply wanted to fish in the troubled waters of Bengal, and annex the whole, or, at least, a part of it to his own dominions. The Wazir would have been the last person to espouse a ruined cause out of sheer generosity towards a co-religionist. Mir Qasim had been repeatedly warned[56] of the dangerous consequences of going to Oudh, but he refused to hold out at Rohtas owing to its unhealthy climate, or to go to the Marathas as he distrusted them. The advice of Mirza Shamsuddin, his Wakil at the court of Shuja-ud-daulah, who held out hopes of an alliance with the Wazir influenced Mir Qasim to a great extent.[57] There were many others in the camp who persuaded him to escape to Oudh for their own selfish interests; and when, finally, the Wazir's promise of safe conduct was received along with a 'Quran,' Mir Qasim no longer entertained any doubts, and left the banks of the Karamnasa for the Wazir's country.

The question arises, "Why did the Wazir invite the ex-Nawab at all?" That he did not intend to espouse the latter's cause is certain. If he had so intended, he would

[56] Siyar, p. 742, and Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., VI, p. 129).
[57] Siyar, p. 743.

have responded to Mir Qasim's appeals, and would have interfered in the war much earlier, and, besides, would not have repeatedly congratulated the English on their victory professing also at the same time his friendship for them.[58] It seems that the Wazir had a number of objects in view, when he pretended to welcome the fugitive Nawab:—

(*i*) He knew that the latter carried with him a huge treasure,[59] and this he wanted to secure[60] somehow;

(*ii*) He deemed it impolitic to allow[61] Mir Qasim to be at large, lest he should cause disturbance to Oudh itself;

(*iii*) He was further aware of the fact that Mir Qasim also thought of seeking the support of the Marathas. He wanted to prevent such an allianace at all costs.[62] A coalition between Mir Qasim and the Marathas might have been a menace to himself;

[58] Trans., P.L.R., July-Dec., 1763, No. 25, p. 18, No. 27A, p. 23, and Trans., P.L.R., 1763-4, Nos. 1, 2, 11 and 13, pp. 1—18, etc. *Vide* also Siyar, p. 744.

[59] Three hundred and eighty-five elephants bore his treasure consisting of gold and silver coins as well as jewels (*vide* Imadus Saadat, Lucknow Text, p. 92).

[60] Letter from Shitab Ray to Adams (Trans. P.L.R., 1763-4, No. 3, p. 3). Letter from Padre Windel to Adams (Trans. P.L.R., 1763-4, No. 19, p. 30).

[61] Letter from Shitab Ray to Adams (Trans. P.L.R., 1763-4, No. 17, p. 24.

[62] Letter from the Wazir (Trans., P.L.R., 1763-4, No. 28, p. 48).

(*iv*) Mir Qasim was also reported to be thinking of going over to the Rohillas, or the Jats, and this also the Wazir meant to frustrate.[63]

(*v*) Shuja-ud-daulah had his own designs on Bengal, [64] and so he must have considered it expedient to harbour the fugitive Nawab in his own interests;

(*vi*) The Wazir further intended to persuade the English to cede the province of Bihar to him[65] as a price for his recognition of Mir Jafar. He was led to believe that his professed friendship for Mir Qasim would ultimately force Mir Jafar to acquiesce in the cession of Bihar. It is significant that even on the eve of the battle of Buxar, the Wazir wrote[66] to Mir Jafar, and to the Governor that matters could be immediately settled, if Patna[67] were relinquished and the usual revenues remitted to the Imperial court. It was because these absurd demands could not be complied with, that the Wazir at last seriously determined to commence

[63] Letter from Shakiruddaulah to Batson (Trans., P.L.R., 1763-4, No. 40, p. 64).

[64] Imadus Saadat, p. 94.

[65] Abs., P.L.R., 1759-65, p. 58, and Trans., P.L.I., 1763-4, No. 33, p. 115.

[66] Trans., P.L.R., 1763-4, No. 257, p. 504; No. 261, p. 506.

[67] According to Imadus Saadat, Mir Qasim had also agreed to grant the province of Bihar in case he was restored. The Wazir was thus guilty of double-dealing.

the hostilities. He had carried on negotiations[68] with the English and Mir Jafar through Shitab Ray for a long time past behind the back of his unfortunate guest, but these were ultimately broken off, particularly because of his insistence on the cession of Bihar.

The Wazir had welcomed Mir Qasim in pursuance of the objects explained above, and it was the latter's money[69] which enabled him to march against Bengal. Mir Qasim had never imagined that he would merely be a useful pawn in the hands of his host. His disillusionment came when at Buxar he was treacherously imprisoned[70] at the instance of the Wazir. He was also deprived of almost all that he still possessed. The cup of his humiliation was thus full! The grounds[71] on which this shameful

[68] For details, *vide* Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., VI, pp. 132—45). As Shitab Ray was the father of Kalyan Singh, the latter's Narrative is of special value.

[69] Siyar, p. 746. The Nawab according to the latter had stipulated to pay eleven lakhs per month for the expenses of the war.

According to Imadus Saadat (p. 93), the Nawab had agreed to pay one lakh per day when the army would be on march, and fifty thousand rupees per day when it would remain in camp.

[70] Siyar, p. 755.
Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., VI, pp. 303-4).
Riyaz, p. 385.
Imadus Saadat, p. 93.
Abs. P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 63.
Tarikh-i-Muzaffari, pp. 815-6.

[71] *Ibid.*
Vide also Chahar Gulzar Shujai, (Elliot, Vol. VIII, p. 218).

treatment was apparently ordered by the Wazir are, firstly, Mir Qasim had failed to remit the war contributions regularly; secondly, he had not joined in the attack on Patna; thirdly, he had not sent his troops under Samroo to co-operate with the allied forces; fourthly, he had been alleged to have ordered the murder of the Wazir during the engagement at Patna; fifthly, he had been reported to have designed to escape to Rohtas; and finally, he was alleged to have treacherously written to Shah Alam praying for the post of Wazir, and also the Subah of Oudh for himself, and offering for these favours one crore of rupees in cash, besides jewels worth fifty lakhs. As a matter of fact, these accusations were hollow, and the real explanation of the Wazir's attitude was different. Mir Qasim's wealth was tempting to the Wazir who only needed some fair excuses for robbing him of it. Besides, the Wazir was also eager to placate the English by punishing Mir Qasim, thereby proving his attachment to their cause.[72] He aimed at a peaceful compromise with the English, hence the incarceration of the ex-Nawab was necessary. Kalyan Singh plainly writes[73] that the imprisonment of Mir Qasim was due to the intrigues of Maharajah Beni Bahadur, the pro-English minister of the Wazir.

The ultimate failure of the negotiations between the English and the Wazir did not alter the condition of the unhappy prisoner who passed his days miserably under a close surveillance, and was barbarously tortured by his

[72] Trans., P.L.R., 1763-4, No. 233, p. 463.

[73] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., VI, p. 303).

cruel jailor. According to the Imadus Saadat,[74] Abdul Hasan, the jailor, once forced the ex-Nawab to sit inside a kettle full of boiling water, and pressed him to reveal what secret treasure he still owned! Mir Qasim is said to have complained in anguish, "What does the Nawab Wazir want from me now? He has seized whatever I possessed. If his object is to kill me, I am ready in the name of God. If he likes to spare my life, he may say so, so that I may go wherever I like."[75]

On the eve of the fateful battle[76] at Buxar, the Wazir suddenly released[77] Mir Qasim and allowed him to escape from the battle-field. The luckless prince somehow managed to escape on a lame elephant,[78] and did not even wait to watch the result of the battle. Mir Qasim's downfall was now complete. Driven out from Bengal, he had still a vast treasure, and a large force with him. His alliance with the Wazir of whom he had always been

[74] For full details, *vide* Imadus Saadat, p. 93.

[75] *Ibid.*, I owe the citations from 'Imad' to my friend, Dr. Ashirvadilal Srivastava, M.A., Ph.D.

[76] For details regarding the battle *Vide* Siyar, Khulasat, Imadus Saadat, Ibrat-Namah, Chahar Gulzar Shujai, Riyaz, Gentil's Memoirs, Rene Madec's Memoirs, Diaries of Champion and Harper, Major Munro's reports, Journals of Swinton, Caraccioli's life of Lord Clive, Williams's Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Bengal Native Infantry, Broome's Rise and Progress of the Bengal army, General Letter to the Court, Jan. 3, 1765, etc. Mr. C. E. A. W. Oldham's article on the "Battle of Buxar" (J.B.O.R.S., XII, pp. 1—38) may be perused with profit.

[77] Siyar, p. 763, Khulasat, J.B.O.R.S., VI, p. 306. But, according to Imadus Saadat (p. 94) Fateh Ali Khan, an officer of Shujauddaulah, procured Mir Qasim's release.

[78] Siyar, p. 763.

justly mistrustful since his accession was a sad blunder, and brought on his total ruin. Mir Qasim was henceforth an impecunious adventurer, although he lived for a number of years more. His long and futile intrigues with the country powers and the Abdali ruler are only of biographical interest, and his fanciful scheme of a grand coalition against the English remained for obvious reasons an unfulfilled dream!

CHAPTER XV

MIR QASIM'S ARMY

Himself no soldier, Mir Qasim caused an all-round and drastic reorganisation to be made in the army in a manner, and with a zeal that were truly remarkable. In fact, military reform received his greatest attention after the increase and improvement of the revenues. In the short space of his rule, the army of the 'Nizamat' underwent an unprecedented overhauling, and lost much of its medieval character and organisation. The Nawab's interest in the military administration was profound and unflagging, and, although, himself lacked military ability, or aptitude, he secured the services of talented adventurers under whose guidance a new army was created on European lines in an amazingly short period.

The reasons for the Nawab's unusual eagerness for the reorganisation of his army are not far to seek. His desire for possessing efficient and well-disciplined troops like those of the English did not arise from sheer whim, or vanity, but grew out of certain clear and intelligible circumstances that have to be borne in mind in this connexion. The Nawab realised at the very outset of his rule that the forces of the Nizamat had grown both effete and antiquated. No more than a disorderly and ill-disciplined horde, it had proved to be positively dangerous and undependable on more occasions than one. The Nawab was himself an eyewitness of the rebellion at Murshidabad when his

predecessor's life itself had been endangered by this arrogant and ungovernable rabble. The disgraceful mutiny as well as the openly rebellious attitude of the troops in Bihar during the raids of the Shahzadah were a sufficient indication of the rottenness of the existing forces. No reliance could be reposed in such an army, and its only reform was complete disbandment.

The morale of the army of Murshidabad had deteriorated during the period of confusion following the death of Ali Vardi Khan, and Plassey marked the virtual collapse of the military system of the Nawabs. Mir Jafar had been too old and pleasure-loving to have given any attention to the army, and during his inefficient administration it had become a hopeless mass of uncontrolled mercenaries mutinous for want of pay that happened always to be in arrears. The very safety of the Nawab required its supersession by a properly trained and disciplined force. Besides being unreliable, the army of his predecessors was thoroughly inefficient and demoralised. The Nawab had witnessed its shameful discomfiture during his attack against the Raja of Birbhum, who was defeated only by the Company's troops under Major Yorke and Captain White. The inability of his troops to cope with the armed retainers of even a local landholder showed a glaring inefficiency, and it is hardly surprising, therefore, that the Nawab should have deemed it essential to safeguard his position and honour by introducing a drastic reform in his army in particular, and military administration in general.

What lent an added importance to the necessity for an efficient army was the Nawab's aversion to his

acknowledged dependence on the Company's troops. It was the Company's arms which had been the mainstay of the Nizamat since the accession of Mir Jafar, and but for the successful resistance offered to the Shahzadah and the Marathas by the English, Mir Jafar's authority would not have survived long. Soon after the accession of Mir Qasim the war with the Shahzadah was brought to a successful close by the English troops alone. The Nawab was thus perfectly conscious of his absolute subjection to the English in the matter of the military defence of the 'Subah.' Such a position was galling to an ambitious spirit like that of Mir Qasim who resolved to free himself from the yoke of the Company's forces as early as possible.

It was only by raising an equally strong and efficient army that the Nawab could afford to dispense with the assistance of the English. But, the supreme reason for the army reorganisation was his innate ambition for independence. The *de facto* supremacy which the English had obtained after the revolution of 1757 was fully apparent to the Nawab who strove from the beginning to undermine it by slow degrees, and prepared assiduously for the inevitable rupture with his present allies. He was shrewd enough to realise the futility of setting their power at defiance without an army trained after their fashion. The inherent superiority of the European troops over the hordes of ill-led, ill-disciplined, and ill-equipped oriental mercenaries had been more than once demonstrated in the Deccan; and in Bengal too, Clive's spectacular successes established beyond all doubt the pre-eminence of the Western methods of warfare. Intent on liberating

himself from the control of the English, the Nawab got his army completely remodelled to enable it to hold its own against the English in case hostilities proved to be unavoidable. The Nawab's military policy was further actuated by the desire for territorial aggrandisement. The ill-fated expedition against Nepal showed his lust for conquest. Thus, it was from a variety of considerations that Mir Qasim needed an effective and dependable military force of his own.

Bengal was perpetually in danger of invasion from the north-west by either Shah Alam, or the Wazir of Oudh, and from the south-west by the Marathas. Besides these external dangers, there were more than one powerful chief in the province, who could seriously endanger the authority of Murshidabad. The Rajas of Bishnupur and Birbhum, for instance, had for some time past adopted an attitude of open defiance against the Nawab, because of their immense military resources, and this rise of baronial power was a real menace to the government, when Mir Qasim came to the 'masnad.' The mutinous rabble under the pay of his predecessor could be of no avail against such dangers. Sheer prudence would have necessitated a radical reform of the army. The Nawab's ambition made it all the more imperative!

The Nawab found at his accession a huge standing army of no less than ninety thousand men.[1] It has to be remembered that these forces had served a number of his

[1] Vansittart's Narrative, II, p. 185. Mir Jafar had evidently paid no heed to Clive's advice to dismiss the faithless 'jamadars,' and reduce the number of the forces to 18,000. (*Vide* Beng. Sel. Com., Jan. 13, 1760).

predecessors successively, and that some of the veteran 'jamadars' had been enlisted even before the time of Nawab Sarfaraz Khan. Even if this army had not been a useless rabble, the Nawab could not have trusted it implicitly. He had made it a rule to replace the subordinates of the previous régimes by new men who would owe their rise to his generosity alone. In accordance with the policy which he consistently enforced in every department of the government, the Nawab would certainly have systematically overhauled the entire personnel of the army. His disgust[2] at the despicable conduct of the troops during the attack on Birbhum was, however, so bitter that he decided on an immediate reform. The huge arrears of their pay were cleared off by instalments,[3] and even assignments[4] upon the land revenues had to be made for a speedy liquidation of the debts. No sooner had the Shahzadah left the province, than a general disbandment of the troops was commenced.[5] The Nawab took care to see that the disbanded people were expelled from the country outright,[6] obviously because their presence was considered to be a source of possible danger and anxiety. By this means, the most part of the unwieldy forces were summarily dismissed, and only those who were deemed fit for service happened to be retained.[7] The way was now clear for a fresh enlist-

[2] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 699).
[3] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 350).
[4] Siyar, p. 697.
[5] Abs. P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 9.
[6] Gleig's Memoirs, I, p. 114.
[7] Abs. P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 7.
Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 352).

ment on a different footing altogether. The thoroughness with which this reduction of an unnecessarily large army came to be made was indicative of the Nawab's determination to stop the ruinous waste in military expenditure, which had been one of the principal causes of the financial embarrassments of his predecessor. In fact, the Nawab had given his word to Mr. Vansittart that he would maintain no more than five or six thousand horse, and would thus retrench the expenses.[8]

As soon as the state of his finances improved, the Nawab began entertaining new troops in opposition to the wishes of the Governor.[9] He had a number of plausible pretexts at hand. The threatened approach of Shuja-ud-daulah,[10] the disaffection of the Bhojpur zemindars,[11] the rebellious activities of Kamgar Khan,[12] the danger from Sheo Bhat,[13] and the refusal of several zemindars to pay the revenue[14] were apparently a sufficient justification for raising additional troops. Mr. Vansittart's willing acquiescence in the Nawab's decision was in keeping with his policy of absolute non-intervention. It is needless to add that Mir Qasim could never have flouted the authority of Clive in this manner.

Encouraged by the benevolent neutrality of the Governor, the Nawab quietly forged an efficient instrument

[8] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 286, p. 134.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Abs. P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 9.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

of war, and the total strength of the army at the outbreak of his war with the English was about twenty-five thousand men.[15] Though far inferior in numbers to the forces of his predecessor, it was decidedly superior in point of quality, efficiency, and organisation. The vast wealth which the Nawab had been amassing[16] by means of confiscations, fines and strict revenue collection was freely utilised[17] for the equipment, training, and maintenance of his force.

Mir Qasim was one of the first among the Indian princes who had perceived the importance of organising their troops on the Western model. The dramatic successes of small European forces against the vast hordes of the country powers had conclusively proved the excellence of European methods and discipline, and the efficient sepoy regiments of the European Companies were a standing example of the fact that the 'Hindustani' soldier could be successfully disciplined in the European manner. Although lacking the soldierly talents of Haidar Ali, Mahadji Scindhia, or Ranjit Singh, the Nawab was no less eager to Europeanize his army, and during his short rule, he practically revolutionised the army of the Nizamat.

These changes were effected under the supervision and control of a host of adventurers, European and Armenian, who had been warmly welcomed by the Nawab for training

[15] It may be noted that even in the best days of the Mughal Empire, the standing army of the Subah of Bengal consisted, according to Ain-i-Akbari, of 23,330 cavalry, and 801,150 infantry.

[16] Siyar, p. 708.

[17] An idea about the lavish expenditure can be formed from the following instance mentioned by the author of Imadus Saadat (Lucknow Text, p. 92). Even barbers, water-carriers, and washermen serving in the army had elephants to ride on.

his forces after the latest fashion. Among these soldiers of fortune, the names of Gurgin Khan, Marcat, Arratoon, Samroo, and Gentil are the most conspicuous. Besides these, there were a number of foreigners who had been diligently sought out by the Nawab, and they were entrusted with the reformation of his army. Every vagabond European, or Armenian with the least pretension to military experience was sure to be taken in the Nawab's service. Even sepoys who had been discharged, or had deserted from the English regiments were gladly entertained on a higher salary. In fact, towards the end of the Nawab's rule, such desertions were deliberately encouraged by the latter's agents.[18] It appears from a contemporary account[19] that the number of such European or Indian deserters in the Nawab's service was not inconsiderable. Among the Nawab's troops that encountered Major Adams at Sooty, there were numerous sepoys who had deserted from the Company's battalions at Patna, and one hundred and fifty English deserters as well.

Gurgin Khan (Khwajah Gregory), brother to the well-known Armenian diplomat and merchant, Khwajah Petruse, was the principal military adviser of the Nawab, and was virtually both commander-in-chief and war minister. It was under his superintendence that the army was transformed,[20] and it was to his supreme organising genius that the re-making of the Nawab's Infantry, Artillery and Cavalry was

[18] Ben. Sel. Com., June 17, 1763.

[19] "A short sketch of the Troubles in Bengal" (Powis MSS.) *Vide* Forrest's Life of Lord Clive II, p. 238.

[20] Siyar, p. 696, Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, pp. 351-2).

due. Born at Ispahan, and originally a humble cloth-merchant,[21] he had risen by sheer merit at a comparatively early age, and at the time of his murder he was barely thirty-six.[22] Nothing, in the words of Raymond who was a contemporary of the general, was wanting in that man to render him capable of shining even in Europe, but education; he owed everything to his own genius, and nothing to art, or cultivation. That such a man became the chief favourite[23] of the Nawab is hardly surprising, and that his extraordinary influence with his master should have excited the bitterest jealousy[24] of others may be easily understood. First appointed as the 'darogah' of artillery,[25] Gurgin Khan was commissioned to remodel the whole army, and thus by virtue of superior talents he held the supreme command of the army till he fell a victim to the machinations of a treacherous conspiracy against himself.

Discipline was enforced in the new army with such strictness and exactitude as had never been known to the proud mercenaries who constituted the Nawab's forces. Mir Qasim had mainly recruited Persians, Tartars, Afghans, and veterans of the northern provinces,[26] who chafed under the irksome control of the Europeans and the Armenians.

[21] Siyar, p. 738.

[22] Raymond's translation of Siyar, Calcutta Reprint, II, p. 502 (*vide* his footnote, No. 267). Raymond who personally knew Gurgin has paid an eloquent tribute to "the soaring genius" of the latter, and has strongly criticised Ghulam Husain's prejudiced opinion about him.

[23] Siyar, p. 708.

[24] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 351).

[25] *Ibid.* Siyar, p. 696.

[26] Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 352).

Ghulam Husain has poured ridicule[27] on the vain attempt of Gurgin Khan to introduce such strictness of discipline as was enforced in the English army. Anxious to imitate the English model, Gurgin Khan and his staff strove to drill the men of the proud races of the north into orderly and civilized regiments, and might have succeeded, only if more time had been available to them. Although a semblance of success was achieved during the short space of Gurgin Khan's authority, the latter's severity earned him the bitter hatred of the soldiery,[28] which was further heightened by Muslim animosity against Armenians. In fairness to Gurgin Khan, it must be admitted that under his guidance, the Nawab's troops became far better disciplined than any other army of Hindustan, and fought on more than one occasion with a bravery that caused surprise to their antagonists.[29] The only Muslim officer who shared with Gurgin Khan the credit for having reformed the army was Muhammad Taqi Khan, a native[30] of Persia. Possessed of a remarkable capacity for leadership and organisation, he had himself raised and trained a picked body of Musketeers who were considered to be the most

[27] Siyar, p. 738.

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] Third Report (Carnac's evidence).
Vansittart's Narrative, III, p. 395.
Bolts: Considerations on India Affairs, p. 43.
Lt. Glen to Major Carnac, July 13, 1763.
(*Vide* Bengal, Past and Present, Vol. VI, p. 247).
Major Adams to the Governor, Aug. 2, 1763, (*vide*, *Ibid.*).

[30] Siyar, p. 708; Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, 352).

efficient ones in the whole army[31]. Ghulam Husain, prejudiced as he was against Gurgin regards[32] Taqi Khan as more worthy of the post of commander-in-chief than the latter whom he frequently calls in contempt "the seller of cloth by the yard."

One of the most praiseworthy features of the Nawab's military administration was the punctual payment of salaries. Arrears were never allowed to accumulate, and the Nawab took every care to ensure a regular payment of the troops. According to Ghulam Husain, Mir Qasim was so scrupulously exact in this respect that no complaint of non-payment was ever heard of in his time, nor was a false muster imposed.[33] The Nawab was never easy till the dues of the army were regularly paid.[34] When it is remembered that it was the traditional habit of the Indian rulers including even the Great Mughals to allow the salaries of the soldiers to fall into arrears,[35] one cannot but appreciate the wisdom of Mir Qasim's innovation in this direction. Being fully cognisant of the troubles that had arisen in the past owing to the irregular payment of the army, he was determined not to repeat the mistake of his immediate predecessors like Siraj-ud-daulah and Mir Jafar. He had no faith in the belief that a soldier who had been paid up to date was more likely to desert than one with a large amount standing to his credit. Clive did not exaggerate

[31] Siyar, p. 730.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 708.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 712.

[34] Abs. P.L.R., 1759-65, p. 3.

[35] Scrafton's Reflections on the Government of Indostan, pp. 28-29.

when he stated, "It is the custom of the country never to pay the army a fourth part of what they promise them; and it is only in times of distress that the army can be paid at all, and that is the reason the troops always behave so ill."[36] Not only was punctuality of payment rigorously enforced, but there was also an all-round increase of salaries.[37] In short, the Nawab was keen on keeping his soldiery contented and loyal.

Mir Qasim's endeavour to start an extensive manufacture of arms and ammunition was an unusual move on the part of an Indian ruler of those days. The Indian princes had so far hardly cared to master the technique of arms manufacture, and they usually depended on the Europeans for the supply of guns and other military stores. The Nawab resolutely aimed at making himself less dependent on the foreigners in this respect. That his ambitious project did not end in smoke reflects great credit on Gurgin Khan under whose efficient management the casting of cannon, and the manufacture of muskets were successfully commenced.[38] A huge foundry was set up for this purpose at Monghyr, which became the principal depôt, although there seem to have been a large number of smaller magazines and factories in different parts of the country.[39]

It is indeed remarkable that the arms manufactured at Monghyr were not inferior to those imported from Europe. The flints of the muskets were made of the Rajmahal agates,

[36] First Report, 1773, p. 155.

[37] Siyar, p. 730.

[38] Siyar, p. 708.
Reflections on the Present Commotions in Bengal, pp. 9-10.

[39] Third Report, 1773, p. 302.

and the metal of the barrels was considered to be better than that of the English muskets.[40] It must surely be very surprising that such excellent muskets could be produced by indigenous artisans, as surpassed even the best Tower-proof arms of the English. The guns cast at Monghyr were chiefly made of brass, and the most part of the field artillery had either been secured from the Company,[41] or clandestinely purchased from the Europeans.[42] The gun carriages were, however, all made locally with elevating screws, and were, in every respect, as good as the English models.[43] The gunpowder prepared in the country was equally excellent, although a large part of the bullets and shells had to be imported.

In the organisation of the forces, there was a consistent attempt at a close imitation of the English system. The Infantry was modelled[44] on the Company's sepoy battalions, and the soldiers were dressed, disciplined, and equipped

[40] Raymond's footnote to his translation of the Siyar (Calcutta Reprint, II, p. 421). He writes, "The European reader may possibly hear with surprise that those fire-locks manufactured at Monghyr proved better than the best Tower-proofs, sent to India for the Company's use, and such was the opinion which the English officers gave them when they made the comparison by order of the Council of Calcutta."

Vide also, Second Report, 1772, p. 10 and Caraccioli's Life of Lord Clive, I, pp. 83-4.

[41] Rumbold to R. Smith (Orme MSS. f. 182).

Vide Professor Dodwell's "Dupleix and Clive, p. 226, (footnote 3).

[42] Third Report, 1773, p. 304.

[43] First Report, p. 43, 1772.
Second Report, p. 10, 1772.
Third Report, p. 304, 1773.

[44] Siyar, p. 696.

exactly like the English sepoys. They even bore the name of Tilangas like the latter. There was, however, a class of irregulars who, though disciplined in the same manner as the Tilangas, were dressed in Indian style. The infantry was composed, as usual, of regiments and companies with the fixed proportion of common soldiers, Hawaldars, Jamadars, and Subahdars. It is interesting to note that the musketeers of Muhammad Taqi Khan were divided[45] by tens, hundreds, and thousands after the traditional Persian style with an officer at each of these divisions. This arrangement was, however, confined only to the battalions under Taqi Khan. In the Infantry regiments, the commanders were principally Armenians, and Europeans. The whole force, in short, was trained, accoutred, and organised in imitation of the English troops. Fire-locks were also introduced in place of the old match-locks, and were used for the first time by the Nawab's troops during his war with the English.[46]

The Artillery was likewise organised after the European fashion, and was exclusively put under foreigners[47] such as Armenians, Frenchmen, Germans, Portuguese, Topasses, and even English deserters. It has already been noted that Gurgin Khan had started his career in the Nawab's army as the chief commandant of the artillery which was first re-modelled under his superintendence. An immense number

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 730.

[46] Siyar, p. 708.

"A summary view of the East India Company of Great Britain." (Dublin, MDCCLXXXIV, p. 21), also "Transactions in India (1756—1783)," London, MDCCLXXXVI, p. 42.

[47] Second Report, 1772, p. 8.

of field pieces,[48] partly imported and partly manufactured in the country, was collected, and the Ordnance and the 'Top Khanahs' constituted probably one of the most expensive items of military expenditure.

The cavalry formed the only part of the army, wherein the officers were solely drawn from the warlike races of the north. The ranks were filled, as usual, by picked Hindustanis and other Asiatic mercenaries. This force was divided into Regiments, and 'Risalahs.' For each troop of ten, it is recorded, there was a special officer armed with a sabre, whose peculiar function was to kill anyone attempting to desert from the field of battle.[49] The strength of the Cavalry was no less than 16,000.[50] The troopers were well-paid, and well-mounted, and their organisation was not much different from that of the Irregular Cavalry Regiments of the Company.[51]

Such was the army raised by the Nawab in the course of a little more than two years, with which he confidently embarked on a war against the English. He had hoped that his newly-trained troops would successfully hold their own against the English, and redeem the honour of Muslim rule in Bengal. All hopes were shattered at Katwa, Sooty, and Udanala. In spite of the best available training imparted by foreigners, and notwithstanding the reforms introduced by the Nawab, his army ultimately broke down like a house of cards. An explanation for this can be

[48] Siyar, p. 708.

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 697.

[50] Vansittart's Narrative, II, p. 185.

[51] Broome's Rise and Progress of the Bengal Army, Vol. I, p. 351,

found from an analysis of its inherent nature and composition.

In the first place, the army having been promiscuously composed of mercenaries of all races lacked cohesion. In the second place, the indiscriminate elevation of Armenians and Europeans created a feeling of bitter rancour and jealousy in the minds of the Muslim commanders, and was responsible for the wide gulf between the Muslim and the non-Muslim elements in the army. The universal hatred for Gurgin Khan and the conspiracy that culminated in the latter's assassination were the outward symptoms of this hostility to non-Muslims. In the third place, the foreign adventurers belonging to different nationalities, and thus lacking any real bond of union proved half-hearted in the hour of need. In the fourth place, even among the Muslim officers there was no harmony or unity, and their mutual jealousies marred the chances of success. In the fifth place, discipline was lax in spite of all efforts of Gurgin Khan and his staff. In the sixth place, sufficient time had not been available for an adequate training of the forces, and at the time of the commencement of war they were at best only half-trained. In the seventh place, the disastrous expedition for the conquest of Nepal, and the consequent destruction of the flower of the forces had shattered the morale of the troops, and they had hardly breathing time before they were called again to fight against the English. Lastly, the death of Muhammad Taqi Khan and the murder of Gurgin Khan deprived the army of its only two leaders of genius.

The failure of Mir Qasim's army is not without its inner significance. The Nawab's attempt to fight with the

Europeans in their own way marks the beginning of a century during which Tipu and the Marathas in the Deccan, and the Sikhs and the mutineers of 1857 in Hindustan made a futile stand against the English with armies sedulously trained after the western fashion. From Udanala to the mutiny, the same story of frustrated hope is repeated again and again. Mere superficial imitation of the European mode of warfare proved to be of no effect in the absence of that national consciousness and patriotic feeling which gave the English a strength unknown to the heterogeneous levies of the country powers.

CHAPTER XVI

THE REVENUE ADMINISTRATION OF MIR QASIM

It was for matters of revenue and finance alone that Mir Qasim had any real aptitude or capacity,[1] and this is why his revenue administration bears the fullest impress of his personal supervision, direction, and initiative. Having always had a profound taste for Mathematics, he possessed a natural proficiency in controlling the revenue accounts, and checking the financial administration in general.[2] During his short rule, he completely changed the spirit of the revenue system which he had inherited from the previous régime, and sought to revolutionise it by introducing into it new principles, and reviving in a new form the methods and ideas that had once been associated with the administration of some of the former Nazims like Jafar Khan, Shuja Khan, or Ali Vardi Khan. The laxity, inefficiency, and corruption that had crept into financial administration in recent years deeply prejudiced him against the whole system, and the policy underlying it. He determined to clear the revenue administration of its chronic wastefulness, jobbery, and irregularities with a high hand, and himself set to infuse into it a vigour that was in a way unprecedented. Mir Qasim's revenue administration is therefore of peculiar interest. It not only gives a perfect insight into his

[1] Vansittart's Narrative, II, p. 187.

[2] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 712).

characteristic severity and oppression, but forms the background for the revenue administration of the East India Company in Bengal.

The Nawab aimed at thoroughly overhauling the whole structure of the revenue administration, and started with the reformation of the central revenue office. The officials of the former régime were all taken to task for alleged misappropriations, and made to disgorge whatever they had been able to amass for themselves.[3] With the help of some old 'mutasaddis' of Ali Vardi Khan, the Nawab was enabled to detect numerous embezzlements. The farmers and collectors who had been similarly reported against were all ruthlessly punished, and their private property confiscated indiscriminately. In fact, the wealth of the suspected individuals came to be regarded as sufficient proof of their guilt. New officials were appointed to replace the former incumbents both at Murshidabad, and other places. During his short rule, there was such frequent supersession of officials on the slightest suspicion that nobody was safe, and the Nawab was held in great terror on account of his suspicious character, and ability in accounts. The office of the Diwan, and that of the Naib Diwans changed hands several times during régime, simply because the Nawab could not place any reliance on the integrity of his officials.

[3] Siyar, p. 696.

Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 304, etc.).

Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 771).

Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 351).

Beng. Sel. Com., Oct. 26, 1760 (*vide* Letter from Vansittart, dated Oct. 24, 1760). Reflections on the Present Commotions in Bengal, p. 8.

He kept a sharp eye on his revenue officials, lest they should misappropriate government funds, and meted out exemplary punishments to offenders. By sheer terrorism, Mir Qasim soon managed to stamp out all corruption and waste.

It is interesting to note that the Nawab sought to check the influence of the Qanungos who were the hereditary record officers of the parganahs, and, as such, were in possession of all the essential information relating to the value, tenure, measurements, sales, or transfers of the lands. By virtue of their position as Registrars of the lands they[4] held a unique office in the revenue system of the country. Without their co-operation the efficient collection of the land revenue was practically impossible.[5] Mir Qasim was fully aware of their importance, and was determined to curb their traditional authority. He commenced the policy of restricting their duties and influence, and did not put any trust in them. He effectively restrained their usurpation;[6] and if he had long been in power, their inordinate consequence would have absolutely disappeared. Originally[7] meant to be guides in the collection of the revenues, and employed as a valuable check on the zemindars and government officers, the Qanungos had, with the breakdown of the Mughal government, acquired an excessive power which they only too frequently abused to the detriment of the

[4] Journal of Indian History, Vol. III, Part 2. *Vide* Mr. Ramsbotham's article on the Qanungos. His "Studies in the Land Revenue History of Bengal" (p. 154, etc.), should be consulted.

[5] Board of Revenue, Original Consultations, May 18, 1787, No. 63 (*vide* Mr. Patterson's report).

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. II, p. 47, and also p. 66.

government. The Nawab was, therefore, not unjustified in refusing to repose any confidence in them. It may be added that after the restoration of Mir Jafar, however, the Qanungos again acquired their former importance.

The outstanding feature of Mir Qasim's revenue policy, however, was his pronounced aversion to the zemindars.[8] He made it a settled policy to reduce their power, and bring them under the strictest control.[9] It is clear that, if the Nawab had ruled for a sufficiently long period, he would have put an end to the very institution of the zemindars. His prejudice against the latter can be easily accounted for.

In the first place, the zemindars were regarded as politically dangerous owing to their local influence and resources, and could not be depended upon in times of danger and revolution. Ghulam Husain who appears to have been strongly prejudiced against the zemindars as a class has vindicated the Nawab's hostility to them on the ground that the latter were a set of treacherous, short-sighted, and refractory people always ready to turn against the government, and profit by its difficulties.[10]

In the second place, some of the zemindars had come to occupy the position of little potentates in their country, and were openly defiant on the strength of their armies and forts which they had at their disposal. The powerful zemindars such as those of Burdwan, Birbhum, Bishnupur,

[8] Siyar, p. 698.
Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 352).

[9] Siyar, p. 708.
Vansittart's Narrative, III, pp. 381-2.

[10] Siyar, p. 698.

or those of the Bhojpur country possessed large military forces of their own, and with the help of these they could frequently rise against the government, or join any invader. The Nawab naturally looked upon the unusual military resources of these zemindars as a source of real danger to his authority. Their hostile conduct during the incursions of the Shahzadah convinced him of the immediate necessity of overthrowing their power.

In the third place, the Nawab intended to collect all that the ryots paid, and considered the emoluments of the zemindars a huge loss to the state. His idea seems to have been that the zemindars exacted from the ryots an unduly large amount for themselves, and thus defrauded the government of its just share of the revenues. The existence of such middlemen was therefore bound to appear objectionable to the Nawab who wanted to squeeze everything for himself, and leave only the minimum amount for the intermediate agency.[11]

In the fourth place, the Nawab believed that the zemindars deliberately and fraudulently concealed the real value of the lands thus making it difficult for the government

[11] "Original Minutes of the Governor-General and Council of Fort William on the Settlement and Collection of the Revenues of Bengal, with a Plan of Settlement, recommended to the Court of Directors in Jan., 1776." By Philip Francis, p. 23.

"Minute of Mr. Shore respecting the Permanent Settlement of the lands in the Bengal Provinces," dated June 18, 1789.

Burke was guilty of very little exaggeration when he declared in the House of Commons during the trial of Warren Hastings ".. . . .he (the Nawab) began a scene of extortion, horrible, nefarious, without precedent or example, upon almost all the landed interest of that country. . . .began to rack and tear the provinces." *Vide* E. A. Bond's speeches, etc., Vol. I, p. 63.

to ascertain and realise its proper dues. Collusion with the corrupt Qanungos would always enable them to hold back all the vital information concerning their lands, or profits.

In the fifth place, many of the zemindars earned the displeasure of the Nawab for having been reported to have made friends with the Company's 'mutasaddis' with a view to lessen the revenues. Not long after his accession the Nawab complained of it to the Governor who hastened to assure him that the Company's 'mutasaddis' would be punished in case they combined with the zemindars, and that no attention would be paid to the requests of the latter for the reduction of the revenues.[12]

In the sixth place, the zemindars were frequently known to have lent to, or borrowed from the gentlemen of the factories, or the Company's 'gumashtahs.' The active partisanship of the latter was alleged to have encouraged the zemindars to withhold large balances due to the government.[13] The Governor had finally to prohibit the practice of the factory people to lend to, or borrow from the zemindars and other subordinates of the government.[14]

In the seventh place, the zemindars usually under little check freely tyrannised over the helpless ryots, and practised every species of imposition and exaction. The Nawab had thus a good ground for chastising the rapacious zemindars[15] who were guilty of violence, or oppression of any sort.

[12] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 121, p. 20.
[13] Abs. P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 15.
[14] Trans., P.L.I., 1762, No. 146, p. 77.
,, ,, 1762-3, No. 2, p. 4.
[15] Siyar, p. 712.
Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 606).

Lastly, it is apparent that the Nawab meant to follow in the footsteps of one of his distinguished predecessors, Murshid Quli Khan,[16] who had kept the zemindars under a thorough submission and had aimed at putting the collections as far as possible into the hands of his own 'amils' in order to reduce the power of the former.[17]

Mir Qasim's policy of subverting the order of the hereditary landlords was not a novel one. What is significant is that he adopted the principle of his predecessors, followed it consistently, and made it a prominent feature of his government. That the zemindari system in Bengal escaped extinction was really due to the abrupt termination of Mir Qasim's rule. If he had found time to mature his plans, the subjects of the state, as Shore pointed out in his famous minute on the permanent settlement of Bengal, "would have been reduced to three classes only, an oppressed peasantry, rapacious tax-gatherers, and an overawing military."[18] Permitted by Mr. Vansittart to dismiss[19] the zemindars at his will, the Nawab during the very commencement of his rule dispossessed numerous zemindars of Bihar, and appointed[20] his own 'amils' and 'tahsildars.' Subsequently, he imprisoned almost all the principal zemindars of the country at Monghyr. His disputes with the English, however, proved to be auspicious

[16] *Vide* Maasir-i-Alamgiri, p. 483, and Maasir-ul-Umara, p. 751. (Vol. III, Persian Text).

[17] Siyar, p. 698.

[18] Fifth Report on East India Affairs, 1812. (Calcutta Reprint) Vol. II, p. 17.

[19] Abs. P.L.I., 1759—65, p. 11.

[20] Abs. P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 12, and p. 17.

for the zemindars who welcomed the overthrow of the Nawab with a sigh of relief.

The prime object of Mir Qasim's strict revenue administration was to resume for the benefit of the central exchequer all the concealed exactions of the zemindars, faujdars, or jagirdars, and thus easily augment the resources of the government. These so-called resumptions made by the Nawab were actuated by the desire to collect all that the cultivators and ryots actually paid. The profits derived from such increased collections were known as 'Kifayet.' By bringing to account the private exactions, the Nawab made an immense increase of revenue. The enhancement was made under the following heads:—

(A) "*Kifayet Hast-o-bud.*" This increase demanded on a rigorous examination of the rent rolls, and the past and present sources of gross revenue was confined[21] to the two great frontier zemindaries of Birbhum and Dinajpur. The major part of Birbhum had been assigned since the time of Akbar for the maintenance of a local militia to guard the western frontiers, hence the rajas of Birbhum being the Wardens of the Western marches had considerable resources at their command, and after the death of Ali Vardi Khan even aspired after independence. It was thus also a political necessity to resume the assigned lands, scrutinise the actual

[21] *Vide* Grant's Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Finances of Bengal.

collections, and reduce the militia corps of the raja. As the latter would not submit peacefully, the Nawab had recourse to military operations, and compelled him to accept an enhanced assessment.[22] Dinajpur had also been originally lightly assessed, and its farming zemindar was alleged to have withheld from the government vast profits derived from increased cultivation and resumption of jagir lands. The total additional revenue resulting from the 'hast-o-bud' investigations in Birbhum and Dinajpur was estimated by Mr. James Grant at Rs. 14,72,599.[23]

(B) "*Kifayet Faujdari.*" These profits similarly arose from the fresh territorial assessments of the various frontier districts held by the faujdars who had been clandestinely exacting for their own benefit large amounts in addition to the usual revenue. The Nawab could not have tolerated these supposed defalcations, and he took steps to bring these concealed collections to the credit of the government. The total profits accruing from the resumption of the private collections in Dacca, Purnea, Rangpur, Rajmahal, Chittagong, and Burdwan amounted to Rs. 32,15,295.[24]

[22] Siyar, p. 698.
[23] Fifth Report, Vol. II, p. 239.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 236.

(C) "*Kifayet Sair.*" These profits were derived by carrying to public credit the fraudulent exactions in custom duties, etc. The Nawab brought to account the defalcations of the subordinates who had been held to have defrauded the government of large profits arising from markets, customs duties, or various licences. The total amount of "Sair" increase was Rs. 4,58,944.[25]

(D) "*Resumptions of the surplus assessments on Jagir lands.*" The Nawab exhibited an unusual skill in resuming the accumulated assessments levied[26] by the holders of the important temporary jagirs, and including this increased amount in the 'jamabandi' of Jafar Khan. The amount so resumed by the Nawab was no less than Rs. 18,81,014.

Besides the aforesaid "resumptions," the Nawab had recourse to another questionable expedient of effecting an immediate increase in revenue. Owing to a marked depreciation in the value of silver coins, the government had been forced to adopt the practice of annual re-coinage in order to compensate itself by subjecting the 'sikkahs' of the previous year[27] to a 'battah.'[28] The zemindars, however,

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] Grant's Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Finances of Bengal.

[27] According to the mint books of Calcutta, dated March 3, 1760, the Murshidabad 'sikkah' weighed 179·65 grains.

[28] It appears from Hastings's "Regulations proposed for the Government of Bengal" that the Nawab had intended to reduce the

used to levy the whole, and more frequently a larger 'battah' from the ryots on a false plea of indemnification, although they had to pay no discount on the coins of the current year, in which they were to pay their revenue. Mir Qasim being apprised of this fraudulent practice seems to have concluded that a larger assessment could be easily borne by the country than was admitted in the annual 'band-o-bast.' On this assumption, he ordained a general increase in the levy to the extent of $1\frac{1}{2}$ annas, or 3/32 parts of the existing crown rents. The total increase in this manner amounted, according to Mr. James Grant,[29] to Rs. 4,53,448. The amount was estimated at a slightly lower figure by Mr. Verelst whose estimate was adopted in its report by the Committee of Secrecy in 1773. According to the latter, the Nawab made an addition of Rs. 450,164-2-9.[30]

In order to secure the maximum revenue, the Nawab took great pains to introduce the strictest economy in the expense of collection, besides detecting and resuming all the concealed exactions of the zemindars, farmers, faujdars and jagirdars. He appointed 'amils'[31] for the efficient collection of the revenues, and the latter were accountable

'battah' and mix an alloy of copper in the proportion of 9 per cent with the rupees, but these currency reforms were never actually carried out.

[29] Grant's Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Finances of Bengal. His figure is taken from Muhammad Raza Khan's assessment.

[30] Fourth Report from the Committee of Secrecy, 1773, p. 3, and p. 96.

[31] Sixth Report, 1782, Appendix 15.
Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 333).

only to himself.[32] Through his 'amils,' the Nawab controlled the main springs of the revenue administration. He checked the extraordinary power of the Ray Rayan,[33] and cut down the enormous stipends of the intermediate agency.[34]

It is easy to account for the Nawab's unusual severity in collections. The very precariousness of his position led him to make an exorbitant increase in revenue, and reduce the cost of collection to the bare minimum. He not only intended to make his government financially solvent, and meet the demands of the Company, but had also determined from the outset to throw off the yoke of the English, and prepare for the eventual hostilities. His ambition could be fulfilled, only if he had the funds to equip and maintain a large and efficient army. He thus badly needed money, and the only way of raising it was the strict enforcement of economy on the one hand, and the pitiless augmentation of revenue on the other. It may be that the Nawab in increasing the revenues was partly inspired by the example of some of his predecessors like Murshid Quli Khan, Shuja Khan, and Ali Vardi Khan who had all imposed fresh 'abwabs' in addition to the original 'Tumar-jama,' or Todarmal's settlement, but it cannot be overlooked that the former impositions had been insignificant in amount when compared to those of Mir Qasim. The latter enforced in two years an increase which surpassed the total addition made during the last two centuries!

[32] Letter from Murshidabad to the Calcutta Board, March 25. 1765. (*Vide* Miss Moncton Jones: Warren Hastings in Bengal. p. 70).

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] Mr. Shore's Minute, dated June 18, 1789. (*Vide* Fifth Report, Vol. II, p. 17).

Mir Qasim's revenue policy was not only strict, but was also vitiated by a strange disregard of the ultimate consequences of his extortionate demands. Had he been a prudent financier, he would not have preferred an immediate abnormal increase of revenue to a permanent growing income. He was only a relentless collector, rather than a far-sighted statesman. As such, his revenue administration was no better than an organised plunder.[35] Shore whose knowledge of revenue affairs was unequalled felt constrained to admit, ". . . I entertain the strongest conviction that Cossim Ali's demand was a mere pillage and rack-rent."[36] Grant's famous contention[37] that Bengal was under-assessed, and that Mir Qasim's increase had been perfectly justified has failed[38] to convince anybody, because his historical survey is based mostly on unreliable Persian accounts "procured through the influence of a light and private purse,"[39] and his conclusions are tainted by wrong assumptions.

The Nawab had neither the time, nor the inclination to take the trouble of re-assessing the country after investigating whether the ryots could meet the extortionate demands of the zemindars. He did not think it necessary

[35] Ninth Report from the Select Committee, 1783, p. 54.
Sixth Report, 1782, Appendix 14.
Francis: Minutes, etc., p. 23.

[36] Fifth Report, Vol. II, p. 19.

[37] Grant's Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Finances of Bengal.

[38] Ascoli's Early Revenue History of Bengal, p. 47.

[39] Even if it be conceded that the twenty volumes of Persian accounts on which Grant based his estimates are authentic, they can be regarded merely as tentative budgets.

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to get the lands re-surveyed, and the actual produce of the soil ascertained by Amins and Shiqdars,[40] as Murshid Quli Khan had done during his régime. The mere fact that the intermediate agency fraudulently enforced additional impositions was taken for proof of the capacity of the ryots to bear extra taxation without distress. Nothing could have been more short-sighted. It should have been thoroughly investigated how far the impositions were just and equitable. The Nawab was, however, not eager to be benevolent. His purpose was simply to enhance[41] the resources of the state by appropriating the alleged profits of the zemindars. It must not be forgotten that the ryots were not protected from new exactions of the latter who did certainly attempt to make up for what they had lost.[42] Thus, the increased burden really fell upon the impoverished ryots who groaned under a double taxation in addition to a multiplicity of local exactions.

It has often been hastily assumed that the extreme misery of the masses during Mir Qasim's rule was due to the rapacity of the English merchants and their subordinates. That it was the crushing weight of taxation which was principally responsible for the excessive poverty of the masses is generally overlooked. A few details are available which serve to indicate the ruinous effect of Mir Qasim's exorbitant demands. According to Major James Rennell's

[40] For details regarding the survey of lands in Mughal times, *vide* Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. II, p. 45, etc.

[41] Vansittart's Narrative, II, p. 187.

[42] Shore's Minute, dated June 18, 1789.

account,[43] about 30,000 families left the district of Rangpur in one year, and settled in Cooch Bihar which was then outside the Nawab's jurisdiction. Mr. Richard Becher, Resident at Murshidabad, wrote on Aug. 26, 1769, "Cossim Ally by means of his extortions and unjust claims so ravaged and plundered the district (Dinajpur) that afterwards the Aumils of Jaffier Ally Cawn, notwithstanding all the abilities they could exert, could not collect more than ten lacks in the space of two years."[44]

It is thus perfectly clear that the Nawab was utterly blind to the future welfare of the country. He exerted himself solely to enrich himself as quickly as possible at the expense of the rack-rented cultivators. A policy like this was not far from killing the proverbial goose that laid the golden eggs. The heartless severity of the collections was not abated even during a widespread famine that raged in 1761.[45] The scarcity of provisions was so great that children were reported to have been sold[46] in Calcutta. The Governor requested the Naib at Murshidabad, in a letter dated July 24, 1761, to arrange an immediate despatch of rice to Calcutta.[47] The only relief that the

[43] Reports from Committees of the House of Commons, Vol. V, East Indies, 1781-2, p. 36. For a detailed information relating to the revenue operations in Rangpur, *vide* Glazier: "Further Notes on the Rungpore Records," pp. XXXIX—XI.

[44] The Letter Copybooks of the Resident at the Durbar at Murshidabad, 1769-1770. Edited by Firminger, p. XXV.

For the Nawab's settlement of Dinajpur, *vide* the Fifth Report, Vol. II, pp. 121-2.

[45] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 320, p. 158.

[46] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 320, p. 158.

[47] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 340, p. 170.

Nawab appears to have at last afforded to the people was a temporary remission of duties on rice. Even this petty concession seems to have been denied by the exacting collectors. The Diwan of Hooghly had once to be strongly reprimanded for having permitted the collection of duties on grains in spite of the Nawab's orders.[48]

In regard to the total annual income of the Subah under Mir Qasim, there was a difference of opinion between Grant and Shore. According to the former the total 'band-o-bast' of Bengal alone amounted to Rs. 2,56,24,223 at the close of the Nawab's administration,[49] whereas on the basis of authentic records in the revenue department Shore held the total settlement of Bengal for 1169 (1762-3) to have been Rs. 24,11,89,124-5-2.[50] Shore's figures may be regarded as fairly correct. According to the estimates of both Shore and Grant, the total increase made by the Nawab on the former revenues amounted to Rs. 74,81,340. To the revenúes of Bengal should be added about Rs. 65,00,000, the receipts from Bihar, and Rs. 11,00,000 the 'malguzari' of Midnapur.[51] Grant estimated the net annual income of the Nawab after making allowances for all military and civil expenses of the government at the moderate amount of two crores. That this estimate is not far from the truth will be evident

[48] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 345, p. 173.

[49] *Vide* Grant's Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Finances of Bengal. For details, *vide* Fifth Report, Vol. II, pp. 239-255.

[50] Fifth Report, Vol. II, p. 124.

[51] *Vide* Grant's Supplement to the "Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Finances of Bengal," June 30, 1787.

from the fact that the total revenues of the Subah in 1762, according to the accounts taken from the books of the exchequer, were Rs. 2,86,76,813.[52] It is needless to add that the figures noted above relate only to the Diwani Lands, Burdwan, Midnapur, and Chittagong having been ceded[53] to the Company in 1760.

It is a pity that no detailed, or authentic details with respect to the rates are available, but a rough idea about them can be formed from the statements of certain contemporary observers like Holwell and Bolts. It may be stated beforehand that the government dues amounted frequently to no less than one half of the gross produce.[54] Besides the ordinary land rents, the ryot was also forced to pay the additional 'abwabs' imposed by the state as well as by the zemindars. It would, therefore, be no exaggeration to state that hardly anything was left to the peasants beyond a bare subsistence. "In the aggregate," as Sir W. Hunter puts it, "so much was taken by the state as to leave the land no selling value beyond that of the crop on it." The average ground rent was three 'sikkah' rupees per bigha[55] (about one-third of an acre), but this is only a moderate estimate, and is applicable only to rice-producing lands. The rate for Peas, Wheat, Barley, and

[52] The East India Examiner, No. III, Sept. 13, 1766, p. 16.

[53] For details regarding the revenues of the ceded lands, *vide* Fifth Report, II, pp. 257—60, and Fourth Report from the Committee of Secrecy, 1773.

Mr. Johnstone in his "Letter to the Proprietors of East India Stock, p. 4," stated that the ceded lands yielded roughly £600,000 per annum.

[54] Hunter's Bengal MS. Records, I, p. 28.

[55] Holwell's "Interesting Historical Events," p. 221.

other grains was never less than half the produce, and that for opium, sugar-cane, or betel varied from seven to thirty-two 'sikkah' rupees per bigha.[56]

Mir Qasim's revenue administration, devoid as it was of every principle of sound policy and statesmanship, marked one of the worst periods of rack rent and exploitation in the revenue history of Bengal. The economic resources of the country were ruthlessly strained almost to the breaking-point for the benefit of the state; and the well-being of the ryots, upon which alone rests the advancement of an agricultural country like India was woefully neglected!

[56] Bolts: "Considerations on India Affairs," p. 154.

CHAPTER XVII

THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE AND POLICE

Neither an inventive genius, nor an impatient reformer, Mir Qasim had also no time for a radical overhauling of the machinery of justice and police, which he had inherited from his predecessors. It was mainly a continuation of the system introduced by the Mughal government,[1] and Mir Qasim cannot be said to have contributed any new ideas, or principles. All that he did was to enforce the existing system with the severity[2] that characterised his entire administration. The organisation of the judiciary and police during Mir Qasim's régime was thus modelled on the system of his predecessors with all its intrinsic shortcomings and limitations.

The Nawab was the fountain of justice, and in fact was the highest judge in the 'subah.' Like the Mughal emperors, he used to try cases himself in open court, and in accordance with the practice[3] of Murshid Quli Khan, he held court two days in the week to hear petitions, and mete out justice to complainants.[4] As Nazim, he was the supreme magistrate in the country, and all cases of a capital nature had to be referred to him before the final execution of the sentence. The Nawab made himself the real

[1] For details, *vide* Ain-i-Akbar, Vol. II, p. 37—49.

[2] Siyar (Lucknow Text, p. 712).

[3] Riyaz (A.S.B. Text, p. 255).

[4] Siyar, p. 712.
Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 606).

head of criminal justice, and was not content to remain a nominal Nazim. He strictly enforced the dispensation of even-handed justice, if his own interests were not affected in any way, and in all the trials conducted by himself, he used to cross-examine the plaintiff and the defendant, and sift all the relevant evidence minutely before giving his final judgment.[5] He took care to see that nobody in his court asked for, and accepted a bribe, or tried to tyrannise over the suitors.[6] In short, the corruption and venality that used to be rampant in the court of Murshidabad during the régime of his predecessor were effectively curbed by Mir Qasim.

Under the Nawab, there were 'faujdars' who acted as magistrates and chiefs of police in each 'chaklah.' They were the chief executive officers in the 'subah,' and had also jurisdiction in all criminal matters. Being essentially military governors, they were expected to overawe the contumacious or tyrannical zemindars, ensure the regular collection of the revenue, and maintain peace in their respective divisions. They were thus invested with full magisterial powers, and were the representatives of the Nawab in the district which always comprised many zemindaries, and to them the people looked up for justice.[7] The 'faujdars' had a number of 'thanahdars' below them, who held charge of the police stations in the 'parganahs', and assisted the Faujdars in maintaining order and peace,

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Vide* Hastings's Minute, dated Dec. 7, 1775 (Beng. Secret. Cons.).

and enforcing the payment of the revenue with their armed constables. The 'faujdars' had also under them the 'kotwals' who were the officers of police in cities, and were specially responsible for the maintenance of the peace at night.

The ancient militia of the country, the village watchmen, who were under the immediate supervision of the zemindars guarded the villages, and were the source of information of all that happened in their jurisdictions.[8] These local 'chaukidars'[9] were not state employees, but lands had to be allotted for their maintenance, and these lands were commonly known as 'chakaran zamin.' The zemindars were subject to the 'faujdar' of their district, and had to keep the latter constantly informed of every disorder in their areas. It was their duty to maintain peace, apprehend thieves and dacoits, and keep the roads safe. They were also answerable for all thefts and dacoities committed in their lands. The losses had to be made good by them[10] in case the stolen goods were not recovered. This traditional practice of holding the zemindars responsible for all dacoities or thefts was really meant to be a deterrent against connivance, because many of them actually abetted and patronised the robbers.[11] The

[8] Beng. Rev. Cons., April 19, 1774 (*vide* Hastings's remarks on the criminal judicature of Bengal).

[9] *Vide* Mr. McNeile's Report on the village watch of the lower provinces of Bengal, p. 4.

[10] An instance may be cited. An Englishman had been robbed of his money in Rajshahi, and the zemindar of that place was made to pay the amount. (Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 344, p. 172).

[11] Forrest's Selections from the Letters, Despatches, and other State Papers preserved in the Foreign Department of the Government of India, 1772—1785, Vol. II, pp. 454-55.

zemindars were therefore a part of the machinery for the maintenance of peace and order in the country. Whether they were allowed the exercise of a magisterial jurisdiction in criminal cases was the subject of a controversy in the time of Warren Hastings who questioned[12] the accuracy of the statement in the VI Report of the Committee of Secrecy, 1773, to the effect that the zemindar presided in the criminal court of his district.[13] The testimony of Hastings who wrote from personal experience can be safely depended upon. But, it must be admitted that although the zemindars were not the judges of the district 'faujdari' courts which were presided over by the local 'Qazi' and the 'Mufti,' their criminal jurisdiction extended, at least, to the petty offences committed in their areas.[14]

There is clear evidence to show that the Nawab's government failed to maintain law and order in the country. Thefts, and dacoities[15] were too common,[16] despite the spasmodic efforts of the 'faujdars' to prevent them; while certain parts of the country such as the 'parganahs' about Lakhipur[17] were in a state of virtual anarchy and confusion

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] The VI Report of the Committee of Secrecy, 1773, p. 2.

[14] Holwell's India Tracts, pp. 120-1.
Bolts: Considerations on India Affairs, I, p. 81.
The VI Report of the Select Committee, 1782, p. 11.

[15] For details regarding the depredations of a zemindar, *vide* Beng. Sel. Com., Nov. 19, and Dec. 14, 1760. *Vide* Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 21, 1763, for details relating to serious dacoities at Dacca during this period.

[16] Even the house of a zemindar was not secure from molestation. (Abs. P.L.R., 1759—65, p. 20).

[17] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 373, p. 189.

owing to the terrible depredations of thieves, robbers, and armed 'sannyasis.'[18] That a 'faujdar' had to be directed to blow a common thief from the mouth of a cannon[19] in order to strike terror into the hearts of others indicates an almost extraordinary state of affairs in the interior of the country.[20]

Mir Qasim's failure to establish peace and order in spite of his ruthless despotism was due to a number of reasons. In the first place, the country had not known peace since the time of Ali Vardi Khan, when Bengal was constantly ravaged by the Marathas; and the laxity of Mir Jafar's rule had hastened the collapse of the criminal administration making it well-nigh impossible for the Nawab to restore order quickly. In the second place, the Nawab was preoccupied with his political ambitions, and therefore the maintenance of order remained a matter of secondary importance. He was too busy with the augmentation of the revenues, and the establishment of his independence to have any time for the restoration of order in the country. In the third place, the system of police was imperfect, and the vast rural areas outside the cities, although nominally under the jurisdiction of the district 'faujdars,' were looked after by the local 'chaukidars' alone. Thus, the machinery for the maintenance of law and

[18] Beng. Pub. Cons., Feb. 21, 1763, and Dec. 5, 1763. The English Factory at Dacca was once attacked and captured by the 'sannyasis.'

[19] Trans., P.L.I., 1761, No. 373, p. 189.

[20] In the Lakhipur Letter of July 1, 1762, there is a mention of a noted dacoit who forcibly took possession of the zemindari of Babupur. (Beng. Pub. Cons., July 8, 1762).

order was signally inadequate for the country. In the fourth place, the confusion created by wars, revolutions, and invasions which had plagued Bengal since the time of Nawab Sarfaraz Khan had favoured the growth of that class of men who became robbers by profession. Without the promulgation of extraordinary repressive measures as in the time of Warren Hastings, it was impossible to ensure the continuance of the public peace. In the fifth place, the zemindars in many cases either afforded clandestine protection to the dacoits, or simply concealed crime in order to avoid their usual liability for it. Lastly, the incarceration of the principal zemindars by the Nawab made the matters worse, and indirectly encouraged lawlessness in the country.

The administration of civil justice was vested in the Diwan,[21] in accordance with the traditions of Mughal government, although, as a matter of fact, he being in charge of finance was more concerned with the collection of the land revenues than with the exercise of civil jurisdiction. He presided over the 'Khalisah,' or the exchequer, and, as such, he was the highest judge in all civil and financial matters, and cases relating to real estates and landed property. Both the 'Ray Rayan,' the officer in charge of the Khalisah, and the Naib-Diwan assisted the Diwan in all matters concerning the appeals in the revenue and property cases.

Under the Diwan on the Civil side[22] were the 'Qazis,' the 'Muftis,' and the 'Muhtasibs' both in the capital and

[21] For a contemporary account of the Diwan's position, *vide* Vansittart's Narrative, I, pp. IV-V.

[22] Letter from the Committee of Circuit, dated Cossimbazar, Aug. 15, 1772. (Foreign Department Records).

in the districts. The Qazi was the judge of all claims of inheritance, or succession, whereas the Muhtasib took cognizance of drunkenness and the sale of wine and intoxicating drugs, and had also to examine false weights and measures. The Qazi was assisted by the Mufti who had to explain the law. After hearing the parties, the Mufti wrote the 'fatwa,' or the law in regard to the case in question, and the Qazi accordingly gave judgment, if he agreed with the Mufti, and in case of his disagreement with the latter, he made a reference to the Nawab who had to decide the question in consultation with the principal jurists of his court.

The Diwan had under him a chain of subordinate officials on the revenue side—'Naibs,' 'Amils,' 'Tahsildars,' 'Mutasaddis,' and 'Qanungos.' By virtue of their position as collectors, or recorders they had some jurisdiction in revenue cases. The Naib was the representative of the Diwan in the area placed under the former's charge. The Amil and the Tahsildar were the collectors in charge of a district. The Mutasaddis were the clerks in the revenue department, and the Qanungos kept registers of the value, tenure, and transfers of lands, and thus acted as referees in all cases of dispute, or where there was any uncertainty with respect to rights in land.

Mr. Verelst found the following local courts[23] at Burdwan on his arrival there in 1765, and he mentions that the same classes of courts existed in other parts of Bengal. It may be assumed that as these courts were not newly

[23] Verelst's View, etc., pp. 219-20.

created, they had existed during Mir Qasim's rule too :—

(*i*) "*Sadar Kachehri.*" This was the court where all differences between landlord and tenant were heard and determined.

(*ii*) "*Bakhshi Dastur.*" This court superintended the conduct of all the forces, guards, and other persons appointed for the maintenance of the public peace.

(*iii*) "*Faujdari Adalat.*" In this court, all criminal cases were heard.

(*iv*) "*Barah Adalat.*" It was a court of 'meum and tuum' for all demands above fifty rupees.

(*v*) "*Chotah Adalat.*" Its jurisdiction was confined to suits for debts not exceeding fifty rupees.

(*vi*) "*Amin Dastur.*" It was subordinate to the Sadar Kachehri, and all complaints in revenue matters were first heard here.

(*vii*) "*Bazi Zamin Dastur.*" It took cognizance of all differences relating to charity, or rent-free lands.

(*viii*) "*Bazi Jama Dastur.*" This court took cognizance of social crimes such as adultery, abortion, etc.; and had jurisdiction in matters concerning grants for lands and public works such as tanks, resting places for travellers, etc.

(*ix*) "*Kharaj Dastur*." The zemindars' accounts were sent to it, and in case a debtor was incapable to pay the dues, the court had the power of compromising the debt.

In the absence of sufficient evidence it is difficult to ascertain how far such law courts were adequately distributed in a regular gradation in all the 'parganahs' of the 'Subah.' Even under the Mughal government there had been no regular distribution of courts in proportion to their territorial jurisdictions. The Committee of Circuit found in 1772 only ten courts[24] having a nominal existence at Murshidabad, and Hastings's early impression consequently was that there were practically no courts in the country. The absolute breakdown in the administration of justice during the years intervening between Mir Qasim's everthrow and the inauguration of Hastings's reforms was, it may be admitted, due to the confusion caused by Clive's Dual System, but it would not be far wrong to suppose that owing to the shortness of his rule, and his numerous preoccupations Mir Qasim could not have established an adequate number of graded law courts to bring justice within the easy reach of the common people. The territorial jurisdictions of the district faujdari and Diwani Courts being vast, only the comparatively well-to-do people[25] could have had access to them. In the interior of the country, the zemindar's

[24] *Vide* Letter from the Committee of Circuit, Aug. 15, 1772 (Foreign Deptt. Records).

[25] *Vide* Verelst's View, etc., p. 229, for his remarks on the corrupt practices of the Muslim judges.

'Kachehri' was the only refuge for the villagers, where a rough-and-ready type of justice might be obtained.

From the scanty details available regarding the Nawab's judicial administration, it appears that the award of barbarous punishments[26] was common. Mutilation which is sanctioned by the Islamic law was freely ordered by the Nawab himself.[27] The execution[28] of political suspects was frequent, and their trial was not always fair and just.[29] The administration of civil justice too was generally neglected, although to make a parade of his impartiality and generosity the Nawab espoused the cause of some petty landholders who had been dispossessed of their lands by the bigger zemindars, and got them reinstated on the testimony of the Qazi and the Mufti of their respective districts.[30] As a matter of fact, the Nawab's attention was so much absorbed in the increase of his revenues, that he gave little heed[31] to the administration of justice.

Among the more common and traditional abuses in the judicial system, which were not removed till the time of Hastings, the following may be cited:—

(*i*) No records of proceedings were kept by the courts.

[26] Siyar, p. 715.
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] Muzaffar-namah (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 324, etc.).
Tarikh-i-Muzaffari (Alld. Univ. MS., p. 777, etc.).
Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., VI, p. 124).
Siyar, p. 710.
[29] Siyar, pp. 710-11.
[30] Siyar, p. 712.
Khulasat (J.B.O.R.S., V, p. 616).
[31] Reports from the Committees of Secrecy; The VII Report, p. 325, 1773.

(*ii*) The Qazis, or the Muftis received no fixed salaries, and levied fees, or fines called "Chauth."[32]

(*iii*) The 'faujdari Bazi jama' was an obnoxious kind of fine for petty misdemeanours, and was an incentive to bribery.

(*iv*) Certain practices supported by Muslim law, which presented serious difficulties during the reorganisation[33] of the system of judicature by Hastings, were extremely improper and anomalous, such as the infliction of fine, instead of capital punishment, for murder with an instrument not formed for shedding blood, the privilege granted to sons or the nearest relations to pardon a murderer, or the execution of the sentence passed on the murderer by children or nearest of kin.

The only part of the machinery of law and justice, which underwent a thorough reorganisation under Mir Qasim was the Department of Intelligence. It had been an essential feature of the Mughal government,[34] but had

[32] Verelst's View, etc., p. 136.

[33] Letter from the Committee of Circuit, Aug. 15, 1772. (Committee of Circuit, p. 241).

Letter from Hastings, dated July 1, 1773.

(Beng. Rev. Cons., Aug. 3, 1773).

[34] For details concerning the 'Waqainawis,' the 'Sawanih-nawis,' or the 'Khufia-nawis,' *vide* Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. I, pp. 258-9.

practically broken down after Ali Vardi Khan, and it was re-established on a sound footing by the Nawab. He made it, however, more an instrument of terrorism than an agency for the detection of crime. The department had to keep him informed of everything concerning the affairs of the chief officials, zemindars, and other important people in the country,[35] and money was lavishly spent[36] for procuring intelligence.

Raja Sukh Lal was the chief of this Department, and was assisted by three superintendents, each of whom had under him several hundreds of spies and 'harkarahs.'[37] Their duty was to keep a vigilant watch on all the prominent people in the 'subah,' and report their doings minutely and regularly. This system of ruthless inquisition created, according to Ghulam Husain, a regular terror in the country. Nobody could feel secure owing to the overzealous activities of the spies who never hesitated to make[38] even false and frivolous accusations. All social relationships were looked upon with suspicion, and Ghulam Husain writes, "So suspicious a government soon interrupted all social intercourse, and people, accustomed to a certain set of actions and acquaintances and visits, now found themselves under the necessity of abandoning them at once, and of living at home altogether."[39] This at once reminds one

[35] Siyar, p. 709.

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 709-10.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 710.

[39] Raymond's Translation of Siyar (Calcutta Reprint, II, p. 427). *Vide* Text, p. 710.

of the days of Alauddin Khilji who had similarly made the lives of the nobles miserable by means of excessive espionage. The spies often abused their powers, and tyrannised over the people on bare suspicion. Ghulam Husain mentions how on one occasion he himself had been needlessly harassed, put under confinement, and subjected to ill-treatment, though subsequently he was released by Rajballabh who happened to recognise him.[40]

The Department of Intelligence was thus busy with the collection of intelligence of all that transpired in the 'subah,' and was obviously meant to be a check on the zemindars, and the officials of the government. The innumerable acts of tyranny,[41] of which the Nawab was guilty, were in a large measure due to the daily reports made by the spies, most of whom were highly unscrupulous in the discharge of their duties. Ghulam Husain particularly refers to one named Nannu Mal who was an exceedingly wicked and revengeful fellow, and was responsible for the ruin of countless families.[42] Such relentless espionage was bound to create a general discontent in the country, although immediately it might have operated as an effective restraint on the highhandedness or corruption of the faujdars, the Naib-diwans, and their underlings.

In the administration of justice, Mir Qasim showed neither the affable considerateness of Nawab Shujauddin

[40] Siyar, p. 710.

[41] Muzaffar-namah, p. 303.

[42] Siyar, p. 711.

Khan,[43] nor the stern uprightness of Murshid Quli Khan.[44] His brief rule witnessed no improvement in the judicial system, and his own suspicious and vindictive character could not have been favourable to an impartial administration of justice.

[43] Riyaz, p. 292.

Siyar, p. 472. Ghulam Husain has called him a second Naushirvan in generosity and justice.

[44] Riyaz, p. 285. Murshid Quli Khan was so impartial that he did not pardon his own son guilty of having oppressed a man, and had him executed. He thus won the appellation of " Adalat Gustar."

CHAPTER XVIII

MIR QASIM'S CHARACTER

Mir Qasim's personality, complex as it was, forms an interesting study. A child of his age with all its peculiar characteristics, he was yet possessed of certain qualities which distinguish him from the common run of the Indian rulers of his time. It was because his character was marked by a strange combination of contrasts that it has either been overestimated, or underrated. A persecuted hero in the eyes of some, he appears to others no more than a despicable tyrant. Even his contemporaries held irreconcilable views with respect to his character, and it is, therefore, hardly surprising that subsequent writers have expressed conflicting opinions in regard to the Nawab.

That Mir Qasim was an able, vigilant, and strict administrator has been generally admitted. He is extolled for his uncommon talent for business, and remarkable application by such competent observers as Warren Hastings and Ghulam Husain. There is no doubt that the Nawab had an extraordinary ability for the routine work of government, and that his zeal for reform and efficiency was equally great. The energy, perseverance, and acuteness that he showed in overhauling the administration of his predecessor were praiseworthy, and the sternness with which he changed the whole tone of the late régime, and stamped out its irregularities was indicative of a real capacity for supervision and control. The rehabilitation of the finances,

the reorganisation of the departments of revenue and justice, the creation of a new army on western lines, the repression of baronial power, and the general reconstitution of the 'Nizamat' were no mean achievements, and the Nawab justly deserves credit for these. The very fact that he disdained the life of indolent ease, and sought to infuse a new spirit into the machinery of government through his own hard work and attention to every detail demonstrated his special aptitude for administrative work.

As an administrator the Nawab had undeniable merits. He was a zealous and unsparing worker himself, and knew how to make his subordinates work with him. For more than a year after his accession, the Nawab is known to have laboured indefatigably and without rest at the work of the reformation of his government and army. Such diligence and industry on the part of an Indian ruler were almost unparalleled in that age. He was uncommonly shrewd in judging the character of those with whom he had to deal, and could exploit the virtues and weaknesses of others to his own advantage. A strict disciplinarian, he was feared by his servants for his merciless severity and unsleeping vigilance. Fraud, corruption, and negligence were punished so ruthlessly that these became for the time being exceptions rather than the rule. The Nawab was a hard task-master, and enforced regularity and discipline with an iron hand. Ghulam Husain has hardly exaggerated when he calls the Nawab the most remarkable prince of his age on account of his skill in tackling the problems of administration and finance, insight into men's character and motives, enforcement of a strict economy without appearance of parsimony, and introduction of regularity in the payments to the troops.

Notwithstanding all his abilities, industry, and enterprise, Mir Qasim was no statesman. He could surely have been a brilliant 'Diwan,' or minister, but was totally unfit for the position of the head of a government.

Ambitious and vain in an unusual degree, he lacked personal courage and genius for war. His timidity and cowardice were so conspicuous that even his avowed admirers could not fail to notice it. Never trained as a soldier, he did not seem to possess even ordinary military talents. Devoid of personal bravery, the Nawab was prone to nervousness at the hour of the slightest danger. He was easily agitated, and he could never face any crisis coolly. The Nawab's character exhibited a queer mixture of ambition and timidity. Wanting in military leadership and personal heroism, the Nawab was yet ambitious to win the laurels of a conqueror, and the prestige of an independent monarch with the help of a mercenary army and a long purse alone. His downfall is thus hardly surprising!

Like all selfish tyrants, he had abnormal distrust of others. He suspected every official high or low, and punished mercilessly on bare suspicion. Imprisonment or execution stared in the face of every Naib, Faujdar, or Amil who happened to be reported against by the unscrupulous myrmidons of the Intelligence department. There was a regular terror in the minds of the officials, and nobody knew when he would incur the wrath of his suspicious master. Those who were, or had been connected in any way with the English, or the late Nawab could expect no mercy at all, and were consistently incarcerated, or massacred. Such organised terrorism and repression could not but

defeat their own ends, and create a universal abhorrence of the Nawab's rule.

Suspicious and cynical by nature, the Nawab had grown more so owing to the prevailing atmosphere of duplicity, intrigue, and treachery, hence he did not trust even his highest officials. The fate of Ramnarayan, Rajballabh, Naubat Ray, Sitaram, Saadullah, or Gurgin proved that even the biggest officials were not safe, while the number of the comparatively obscure people who had been harassed, or executed was legion. So suspicious a ruler could not have inspired loyalty, enthusiasm, or confidence among his subordinates. As in the case of all autocratic rulers, overcentralisation was the besetting sin of the Nawab, and inspired as it was by an open distrust of his functionaries, it sapped the foundations of his government, which he had laboriously laid.

It was, however, the savage cruelty and unbounded cupidity of the Nawab which were mainly responsible for the widespread discontent against his rule, and which helped to bring about his undoing. The inhuman barbarities which he perpetrated, the ghastly massacres of which he was guilty, and the heartless cynicism with which he looked upon the sufferings of his victims are appalling. The savagery of the 'Black-hole' pales into insignificance when compared to the deliberate acts of diabolism, which disfigured the brief rule of Mir Qasim. Even the cruel massacre of the English prisoners at Patna was hardly the worst piece of brutality. The drowning of the batches of Indian political prisoners into the Ganges at Monghyr with sandbags tied to their necks was probably a more atrocious and ingenious massacre than the shooting of the unarmed

English prisoners. It should be remembered that the Nawab had planned to drown the English prisoners too at Monghyr, but was somehow prevented by Gurgin and others from carrying out this design. Their massacre could not long be prevented, and the Nawab revenged himself on his opponents by putting them to death in cold blood at Patna. Gentil has related how the Nawab had vindicated this monstrous act in the following words, "If I fell into the hands of the English, they would not spare my life. I lose my government, but I have at any rate this compensation that my enemies will derive no satisfaction from my fall, for I shall first of all put them all to death."

The massacre of Patna has been explained away by the Nawab's apologists as due to a natural outburst of the hoarded resentment of all the wrongs he had sustained during the three years of his government, and both Vansittart and Warren Hastings have suggested that at least to his own subjects the Nawab had been kind and lenient. Vansittart was so blind an admirer of the Nawab that he has gone to the length of asserting, ". . . . he (*i.e.*, the Nawab) could not be taxed with any act of cruelty to his own subjects." The statement is so palpably absurd that it is needless to examine it elaborately. Instances of the Nawab's cruelty and oppression are numerous, and can be read in the pages of the Siyar-ul-Mutakhkhirin, the Muzaffar-namah, or such other chronicles.

The oppression of the wealthy people in the country was one of the special features of the Nawab's régime. In fact, there were very few monied men left, who had not been victimised and fleeced. The officials of the late régime were particularly made to disgorge whatever they had

accumulated, and most of them were imprisoned, or even executed after the confiscation of their entire property. Through such wholesale confiscations, the Nawab was enabled to fill his coffers to his heart's content. Besides, the land revenue was nearly doubled to deprive the zemindars of their alleged profits, but the burden of enhanced taxation really fell on the rack-rented ryots who had to compensate the landlords for their losses. The misery of the masses was consequently awful, but the Nawab relentlessly continued to enrich himself regardless of the consequences of straining the resources of the country to impossible limits. Such a ruler cannot be called a financial genius, much less a statesman.

Despite his unquestioned ability and soaring ambition, Mir Qasim failed to be a great administrator owing to his inveterate suspicion, horrible cruelty, boundless greed, and mean pusillanimity, and it is these shortcomings which ultimately brought on his downfall and tragic end. Full of promise at its start, the Nawab's career ended in dismal failure for want of those essential elements in his character, which go to make a successful ruler and statesman.

As a man, Mir Qasim was not free from the vices peculiar to his age and environment. The idea of morality was foreign to his mind, and he took special pains to procure constantly new recruits to his harem. Excessive dissipation, according to the author of the Siyar, caused a total breakdown of the Nawab's manly vigour, and the most renowned physicians of the country had in the end to be called in for consultation and treatment.

In sheer unscrupulousness, the Nawab had hardly any equal. That he had coolly proposed the murder of Mir

Jafar before the latter's abdication shows how destitute of moral principles he was. A clever and selfish schemer, it was he who had engineered the deposition of his old father-in-law. But for his treacherous intrigue, he would have died in oblivion as a petty 'jagirdar.' It was through consummate diplomacy and finesse that he managed to win the friendship and goodwill of Vansittart and the Select Committee.

Furthermore, the Nawab was fickle-minded and capricious, besides being a slave to superstition. Having been fond of Astrology from his early days, he remained a firm believer in astrological calculations throughout his life. He regulated his conduct and schemes by the auspicious position of the stars, and even during the days of his exile he passed most of his time in anxiously divining from the aspect of the stars whether he was destined to recover his lost power.

One of the principal weaknesses of Mir Qasim's character was his passionate and excitable nature. His innate timidity aggravated this defect, and made him a heartless bully. This is why he had hardly any friends, and was bitterly hated even by his nearest relations. The narrowness of his mind, and a complete absence of chivalry and imagination made him incapable of winning true love, or devotion. He was inwardly feared and detested by everybody who came into contact with him for his extreme suspiciousness and quick temper.

It was, however, the scholarly tastes and attainments of the Nawab, which distinguished him from most of the contemporary rulers in India. He was well-known for his proficiency in mathematics and Astrology among other

subjects, and is said to have been a widely read scholar. Notorious for his sordid greed, the Nawab spent lavishly in honouring and remunerating scholars, poets, and pious men. His liberality in this respect was, however, inspired by mere conceit. He was ambitious to gain distinction for his patronage of learning, but he had, it seems, no taste for fine architecture, and built nothing which can be classed among the architectural monuments of his age.

More inhuman and cynical than the much abused Siraj-ud-daulah, more artful and perfidious than Mir Jafar, more aspiring and persistent than Haidar Ali, more calculating and greedy than Shuja-ud-daulah, more suspicious and exacting than Muhammad Ali, more egotistical and literary than Shah Alam, more timid and nervous than Nizam Ali, Mir Qasim lacked the impetuosity of Siraj-ud-daulah, the indolence of Mir Jafar, the bravery of Haidar Ali, the sagacity of Shuja-ud-daulah, the extravagance of Muhammad Ali, the chivalry of Shah Alam, and the prudence of Nizam Ali. Mir Qasim was obviously one of the most intriguing figures among the contemporary Muslim rulers in India!

ABBREVIATIONS.

Siyar	Siyar-ul Mutakh-khirin.
Khulasat	Khulasat-ut Tawarikh.
Riyaz	Riyaz-us-Salatin.
Beng. Pub. Cons. . .	Bengal Public Consultations.
Beng. Sel. Com. . .	Bengal Select Committee Proceedings.
Trans. P.L.R. . . .	Translations of Persian Letters received.
,, P.L.I. . . .	,, ,, ,, issued.
Abs. P.L.R. . . .	Abstracts of Persian Letters received.
,, P.L.I. . . .	,, ,, ,, issued.
Vansittart. Narrative .	"A Narrative of Transactions in Bengal from 1760 to 1764."
Verelst's "A View, etc." .	'A View of the Rise, Progress and Present State of the English Government in Bengal."
Gentil's Memoirs . .	Memoires Sur l' Indoustan.
Francis, Original Minutes, etc.	"Original Minutes of the Governor-General and Council of Fort William on the Settlement and Collection of the Revenues of Bengal."
J.B.O.R.S. . . .	"Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society."
Alld. Univ. MS. . .	"Allahabad University Manuscript."
Beng. Secret Cons. . .	Bengal Secret Consultations.
Beng. Rev. Cons. . .	Bengal Revenue Consultations.

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